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THE HEART OF A HERO

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Katherine Lowther.

THE HEART OF A HERO

BY

MORICE GERARD

AUTHOR OF

"ROSE OF BLENHEIM," "LOVE IN THE PURPLE," "THE KING'S SIGNET,"
"ONE OF MARLBOROUGH'S CAPTAINS," "THE MYSTERY CAR," ETC.

HODDER AND STOUGHTON

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TO
THE GENIUS OF THE
CANADIAN PEOPLE

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CHAPTER I

IN THE QUEEN'S SQUARE

LORD DION stopped in the middle of a sentence. •

Something electric passed between the two friends; that is to say, something not put into words, but pregnant with meaning. More than half the intelligence of life is conveyed in this way.

Lord Dion Blair and Colonel James Wolfe, closest of friends, were walking slowly along the thoroughfare, which flanked one side of the Queen's Square of Bath.

December was drawing to a close in the year 1757; the streets of the popular resort, then at the height of its fashion, were flecked with snow; two middle-aged men, heavily coated and armed with brooms, were keeping the road clear. They stood on one side while two ladies left the doorway of one of the white stone-built houses, which bordered the Square. At the kerb a sedan chair waited, a manservant holding the door open,

his head uncovered, except for an ample wig, powdered white.

It was the appearance of these ladies, or rather perhaps of one of them, which arrested the eager flow of Lord Dion's conversation, and caused him to press his companion's arm, on which he was leaning, with an emphatic touch.

The two ladies walked in single file, a maid-servant bringing up the rear, carrying a rug. The first lady to issue from the doorway was inclined to be stout, verging on middle life; there was something in her carriage and bearing which suggested decision, and a knowledge of the world. It was not in her direction that the eyes of the two men turned.

Behind her walked a girl, on the threshold of womanhood, not yet of age, but in that interesting and fascinating period of life when the teens are being surrendered. She was wearing a large bonnet, with a white scarf tied over it, meeting beneath her chin, disclosing a throat beautifully moulded, and white beyond compare; a cape covered her shoulders; her dress, in the height of fashion, was slightly hooped over an underskirt of silk, which rustled as she walked.

Before following her companion into the chair the girl glanced at the two men; her eyes brightened, a warm glow suffused the damask of her

cheek; she did not know Colonel Wolfe, but she made a curtsy to Lord Dion, whose hat with plumed feather swept the pavement in response.

Two minutes later this vision had passed into the chair, the maid arranging the wrap over the knees of the occupants; then the door was shut, and the bearers of the chair, after raising the supports to their shoulders, walked on.

James Wolfe had likewise raised his hat; for a full minute he forgot to replace it on his head. Something had happened, he knew not what; some message had reached him, in spite of the fact that he believed himself impervious to such an influence. A pair of blue eyes had traversed his face and figure—only a momentary glance, which had been immediately diverted—yet it had left an effect behind, which nothing would remove or obliterate.

Lord Dion looked at his friend and smiled. There are smiles which are more sad than tears, more poignant than a sigh; this was one of them.

“You have seen a vision,” he said.

Wolfe did not answer. He hardly took in the words, still less the thought at the back of them.

The chair had by this time disappeared round the corner of the Square, in the direction of the Assembly Rooms, towards which the friends were walking.

Wolfe looked up at the house, almost the central one in the block, from which the ladies had emerged, then his eyes swept the pavement, including the servants of the Corporation, again busy with their brooms. Before him were the railings, which enclosed an area laid with grass, with an obelisk in the centre. Without knowing it, all these details were fixing themselves on the retina of his brain, causing an indelible impression, engraving a picture which was to be in his mind's eye when nearly three thousand miles separated him from the Queen City of the West.

A story had begun which was to fire the imagination of the world from that day forward.

Wolfe had only arrived in Bath that very afternoon, travelling by stagecoach. His parents, General Edward Wolfe and his wife, were at that time occupying a house in Bath, next to the one from which the two ladies had issued. Wolfe had called for Lord Dion Blair, with whom he had struck up the warmest of friendships, when the former was in command of the troops at Stirling.

Friendship in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred is composed of dissimilarity, cemented by some point of resemblance; the greatest friends are not those who are most alike, but

most unlike, with, however, some bridge which unites the two souls.

The face and figure of James Wolfe, the most indomitable soldier of his age, perhaps the greatest, are familiar to all the world. His picture, painted by Shaak, in the National Portrait Gallery, has been reproduced in a thousand ways, yet it altogether fails to convey the man as his friends, and, above all, those who served under him, saw him.

In the picture you have the cocked hat, the straight nose, the long upper lip, the full chin; the cravat at his neck, the great buttons of his surtout, his powdered wig, peeping from under the beaver. So far, so good; what is left out is too subtle either for painter or descriptive pen. The eyes tender, deep, suggestive of melancholy, until something happens to stir the ardour of the man, to wake that buoyant, unconquerable spirit. It suggests the simile of a cannon, cold to touch, merely a tube of steel or iron, but once a fire lights the charge, and it becomes sentient, all-powerful, death-dealing, destructive.

The fire which touched Wolfe's brave spirit was the fire of patriotism, the love of the soldier for the cause he represented, the honour entrusted to him.

Lord Dion Blair! True friend, comrade;

contrast, almost foil. A cynical wit in an age of cynicism had given him the sobriquet of *Monkey Blair*, and the appellation, lightly enough spoken, had stuck from that day onwards: the very scavengers in the street whispered it to one another; boys called it after him and ran away; women, powdered and painted, decked in the highest fashion, smiled as he passed. To chivalrous Colonel James Wolfe the very suggestion of such a sobriquet was anathema.

Lord Dion was two years his friend's senior; he had the most beautiful face in the world to those who had the key; to the multitude, the unthinking, fashionable crowd and its satellites he had one of the plainest, for his eyes were slightly crossed, yet behind them was a beauty of expression, a depth of tenderness which indicated the soul, the character behind it. One shoulder was slightly humped—a tall, ungainly figure, with this conspicuous deformity, which no arrangement of cloak or tunic could hide altogether.

Every one was conscious of Blair's imperfections as regards physical form, but no one so conscious as Lord Dion himself. It was the bitter draught of his life, from which he drank daily, down to the very dregs. The misshapen shoulder was the result of a fall when he was little more

than a baby; science in these days would have done much to mitigate the result, if not successful in removing all traces of the disaster. But science then was a very different thing, and the child had to grow into manhood not as God had made him, but in the condition the carelessness of an attendant had brought about. To compensate, as far as might be, Lord Dion's mental equipment was remarkable, and his whole spiritual being tuned to the finest pitch, of which human nature is capable.

His friendship for and admiration of the soldier by his side were almost pathetic in their depth and intensity; he saw in James Wolfe what he himself might have been under different conditions.

The two friends walked on a few yards in silence, Blair thinking of Wolfe, the latter obsessed by the new impression just conveyed, first to his eyes, then through them to the whole organism within.

"You have seen a vision," Lord Dion repeated.

By this time they had reached the turn of the road, down which the sedan chair had disappeared.

The words penetrated to Wolfe's brain, and he turned sharply, as if roused by a touch.

"Yes," he answered simply, "I never saw the like; who is she?"

"The one in front," Blair answered mischievously, "was Miss Angela Lovesay!"

"Pshaw! I did not ask of her."

"Nevertheless, she is important, for she is cousin, confidante, chaperon of her young relative, the girl who followed her."

"Yes, yes?"

"Miss Katherine Lowther, the toast and belle of Bath, unspoilt by admiration; she, whom every one loves!" Blair said the last words with lingering intonation; they hung on the frosty air, as if breathed rather than spoken.

"I have heard of her; my mother has mentioned her more than once in her weekly letters as living next door, but her description falls far short of the reality."

A shudder passed through Blair's sensitive frame; he drew his fur-lined coat more tightly round his chest. Wolfe was too engrossed with his own thoughts to interpret his companion's mood. Lord Dion was one of those people who are endowed with a gift, which no one in his senses would envy—the gift of the seer, the perception of things not as they are, only, but as they may be, sometimes as they will be. A foreboding was in his mind, the cup of his life was

more than usually bitter, as involuntarily he raised it to his lips. Yet, as always, he resolutely drank it and passed on, conscious that in some way life was to be different to him, and to others from henceforth.

As they proceeded their pace slackened; the pavements were crowded with people moving in the same direction—ladies enveloped in wraps, men in long walking coats, adorned with saucer-like buttons. In the road itself carriages of all kinds jostled one another—sedan chairs, cabriolets, coaches, hired and private.

"The Duke of Beaufort," Lord Dion commented, as a handsome equipage, drawn by six horses, with postilions, passed close to them at a walking pace. "His Grace comes here a good deal, putting up at the Bear, or driving from Badminton, as apparently he has this evening."

"It promises to be a big affair!"

"The town is very full just now; the bells are continually ringing to welcome new arrivals."

"They did not greet me!" Wolfe remarked, with a wry smile.

"They will some day."

The Colonel laid an affectionate touch on Lord Dion's arm. "If all you think for me were to come true, I should be a great man."

"What I think is of small consequence, but of

the future—your future—I have no doubt. One day the Abbey bells will ring out in your honour in the city of Bath.”

“May I be present to hear them.” Wolfe braced his shoulders.

They had nearly reached the borough walls, where the large Assembly Rooms had been built, and called after their designer, Thayer.

There was a pause in the traffic, the foot-passengers halted, drawing slightly to one side.

The front of the Assembly Rooms was illuminated with scores of lights, which flickered and flared in the cold north wind.

A wheeled chair made its way through the throng. In it was sitting an old man, whose full curled wig failed to hide the silver hair on his forehead; age had set its mark on one of the handsomest faces of the century; the strong mouth and chin had lost much of the sense of power they had conveyed in earlier years; eyes, once so quick and sparkling, had grown dull; the cheek-bones were high-coloured, contrasting with the pallor below them.

The old man was dressed in the height of fashion, careful as of yore about every detail of his personal appearance; gold lace adorned his frogged coat, underneath a heavy cape, which came open of its own accord, as the doors of the

Assembly Rooms were thrown back by two lackeys, to admit of the passage of the wheeled chair. His white cravat was stiff about his throat, and below it were billows of Mechlin lace, which also adorned the cuffs over his thin hands.

Plumed hats were doffed on all sides; there was a murmur of greeting from feminine as well as male voices, not articulate, but genuine in its appreciation.

“The assemblage has come to do honour to Master Nash,” Lord Dion informed his friend; “there has been a rumour of his supersession by the Corporation in favour of Quin the actor, who, nevertheless, I believe, would not accept the office if the tender of it were made to him. To-night the whole of Bath is doing homage to the man who has made it what it is.”

“For good or evil?” Wolfe inquired in an undertone.

“Is any man’s influence wholly good or wholly evil?”

• With that unanswered query the two friends followed Beau Nash into the palatial building.

CHAPTER II

THE ASSEMBLY ROOMS

OF Katherine Lowther it has been said by a contemporary, well qualified to judge, that her rank and large fortune were among her least recommendations.

Sister of Sir James Lowther, afterwards first Earl of Lonsdale, she had been the toast of the North as soon as she issued from the school-room; the prominence of her family at that period, and for the years that followed can hardly be estimated rightly in this far-off democratic age.

Bath attracted Sir James, and he acquired a house, which he was wont to visit when the season was at its height. Here Katherine resided the greater part of the year with her cousin, Miss Angela Lovesay, to whose charge the young and beautiful girl was confided. It was an age of artifice, of stilted courtesy, of insincere flattery; when women rarely believed

that nature could not be improved without the use of a hundred and one adventitious aids to appearance. Men talked like oracles, and too often behaved like satyrs. Women lived on scandal and the characters of their neighbours.

Katherine Lowther was the exact antithesis of all this; she was simple, unaffected, accomplished in the fine arts, especially music and dancing; a keen reader of the classical authors, a taste which had been imparted by the Rector of the parish in which she had been brought up, an erstwhile Professor and Fellow of Oxford. To talk to her, and to listen in exchange, would have conveyed but a small sense of the rich store in her mind; her language was simple, her modesty complete, her deference to her seniors absolute.

If Katherine had been asked who was her greatest friend in the world, she would have answered without hesitation Lord Dion Blair, and next to him she would have placed her cousin Angela.

. It is doubtful whether the dictum, that no such thing as friendship can subsist between members of opposite sex had been promulgated at that time; at any rate Katherine had never heard it; if she had, she would have laughed it to scorn.

What is friendship? The opening of one heart to another, the mutual understanding which underlies, and sometimes supersedes, speech; sympathy of thought, of outlook, of taste. All this she had in common with Lord Dion. They saw each other, when Blair was staying at his house in Bath, every day; indeed it would have been difficult to avoid meeting, for under Beau Nash, whose rule still obtained, although fast drawing to its inevitable close, the whole social life of the place was thrown into a common vortex. Nash discouraged private enterprises in entertaining, and, by the magnetism of his strong personality, induced the fashionable world to abide by his decision. They met at breakfast; at resorts he had made fashionable; at Spring Gardens, which bordered the Avon, one of the most beautiful and picturesque sites possible, when the morning sun illuminated the waters of the river. Afterwards the Pump-room and the Baths became the focus of activity. Many residents, and some of the guests, did not require to invoke the aid of the waters for the establishment of their health. Among these Miss Katherine Lowther and her cousin were included, but, nevertheless, they, more often than not, sauntered through the wide porticoes of the Pump-room, or, when the

weather was dry and warm, met their friends in the meadows and avenues, which separated the principal streets from the river front.

The evening was the great time for assemblies ; dinner was partaken of at four o'clock, subsequently there were public dances either in Harrison's ball-room, or in the Assembly Rooms, built by Thayer. The theatre also was largely patronised.

During the earlier years of Nash's sway gambling was distinctly encouraged, large fortunes were lost and won over cards and dice, but of late public opinion had veered round, and with it there had been a diminution both in the number of players and in the value of the stakes ; it could no longer be said a man went to Bath, with his fortune in his pocket, and left ere a week was out with only the clothes he stood up in, even his jewellery and horse having passed out of his possession.

Neither Lord Dion Blair nor Miss Katherine Lowther had the slightest sympathy with the faster life of the city, but they mingled in the joyous movement of the place, keeping at the same time an intimate touch on the more serious pleasures of the reader and student.

After the two ladies had entered the sedan chair, on that December evening when Katherine

first saw James Wolfe, neither of them spoke for some minutes; Katherine was full of her own thoughts, while Angela Lovesay was surveying the crowd of foot passengers and vehicles making in their direction. She had a habit of puckering her eyes, which imparted a sense of shrewd humour to her glance before she said anything. She looked at life ironically, but with a wide kindness behind it, else would she not have been Miss Lowther's friend and confidante.

Lord Dion, whose frame was far from being robust, had been within doors for a fortnight. Katherine had missed him while his cold kept him from appearing in public; now she wondered with whom he was walking—a stranger evidently to Bath, for she knew all the habitués. Even in the brief glance which her eyes had vouchsafed to the new-comer, while she acknowledged Lord Dion's salutation, she realised he was a soldier—the upright, drilled figure, the whole bearing conveyed this information. This fact set her guessing, and she soon achieved the truth; she was acquainted with her neighbours, General and Mrs. Wolfe, and was also aware that their son, whose renown had reached her from many sources, was a friend of her friend, Lord Dion Blair.

Yes, undoubtedly her surmise was correct, this

must be James Wolfe, who had won his spurs as a soldier in his teens.

Lord Dion led the way, as was natural, being well acquainted with the place and its customs. His friend followed mechanically; he could hardly believe he was awake, that it was really himself, James Wolfe, who for the greater part of the year had been suffering all the privations which are attendant on an army in the field, when the country is hostile, when provisions are difficult to obtain, and food, as well as being scanty, is of the worst description; the continual vigilant outlook for vindictive and treacherous enemies, the responsibility which rests upon even sectional commanders, when every outpost is a small army in itself. Then had come the voyage home, with all its miseries, especially to a sailor who suffered as did Wolfe whenever on the ocean, culminating in the dark days of November.

In England his anxiety was great—a court martial had been sitting on his late commander, Sir John Mordaunt, for whom he had an affection, having known him from childhood. No one knew better than he that Mordaunt had failed where he ought to have succeeded, failed not through cowardice, but from sheer incompetence

to command. Great had been Wolfe's relief when the General received his sword back again, his judges having taken a lenient view of his mistake.

Wolfe had rejoined his regiment—the 20th—which was stationed at Exeter. He had come fresh from barrack life hard and unattractive, and had suddenly found himself plunged into the vortex of the gayest city in England, perhaps in Europe.

Into that dream had come the vision of a girl, so graceful, so noble in her bearing, so tender in her womanliness, that she had seemed to the young soldier a veritable angel of light. No wonder he brushed his hand across his eyes to assure himself that all was real—that the blaze of lights, which shone on all sides, was not a figment of his imagination, but an actual fact.

They left the vestibule behind them, and, leaving their cloaks in the hands of attendants, entered the spacious central hall. The folding doors were held back by two flunkeys in gorgeous liveries of plush and silver, while a third, still more handsomely attired, with a cord across his chest to which a whistle was attached, announced their names and titles in stentorian tones—

“My Lord Dion Farquhar Blair! Lieutenant-Colonel Wolfe of the 20th Regiment!”

There were few ladies as yet in the Assembly Rooms, most of them having gone to leave their outer wraps in the robing chambers provided for that purpose. Wolfe's eyes in vain scanned the company, searching for that one face which had so impressed his imagination. Katherine Lowther had not yet entered.

The room was mainly composed of men, not a few wearing ribbons and stars, with, here and there, collars of the various orders of English knighthood. One gentleman present was adorned with the Garter.

When the names and titles of the newly-arrived guests were duly proclaimed by the Corporation Herald, Wolfe little realised that all eyes were turned in his direction; curiosity was roused; his reputation had preceded him. In a modest letter, written a few weeks before this, James Wolfe had declared, that only one man had come out with honour from the disastrous expedition to Rochefort. That man was Lord Howe, like Wolfe himself a young officer fired with extraordinary zeal and untempered courage.

Wolfe had omitted another name—his own. But others took care to supply that omission. The merchants of the City of London drank his health at their banquets. Men discussed his prospects throughout the length and breadth of

England; at the meets of hounds, over the mahogany, on the exchanges of Bristol, Hull, Liverpool, Edinburgh and Glasgow. It was known above all that Pitt, the greatest minister of all times, the one hope of England's future, the idol of the middle classes which formed the backbone of the country, had spoken of Wolfe in the King's Cabinet.

The one man, to whom this was as if it had not been, was the modest hero who had entered the Assembly Rooms a moment ago, almost shrinking from notice, feeling himself a stranger in an unfamiliar environment.

The wearer of the Garter, the Duke of Bedford, stepped forward to greet the young officer, showing him at the same time a kind of deference as well as welcome, which did honour both to the noble who offered it and to the simple soldier who received the courtesy.

The Duke had never met Wolfe before, but, on the recommendation of a mutual friend, he had offered him a post of considerable importance and emolument in Ireland—the Duke being at that time the Lord-Lieutenant. Wolfe was known to be a poor man; it was an opportunity which ninety-nine out of every hundred, in his position, would have seized upon eagerly—an easy road to riches, and eventually to high place.

Wolfe had refused it without any hesitation ; his call was to serve his country in arms, to live for her honour, to die, if need be, in her service.

The Duke received his refusal with astonishment, but his surprise speedily gave way to admiration ; he expressed something of this in his manner, as, linking his arm in that of Wolfe, he led him forward to make formal presentation to Beau Nash, the Master of Ceremonies, who was still sitting in his wheeled chair at the further end of the lofty apartment, with some of his more intimate acquaintances on either hand.

Nash at this time was over eighty years of age ; his hearing was defective. The Duke spoke in clear, slow tones to enable the words to penetrate into the brain of the old man.

“I have brought a distinguished guest to present him to you, sir.”

Nash looked at Wolfe with eyes which had not lost that curious discrimination—that capacity for reading character, which had been his strong point throughout his career.

James Wolfe was not handsome, but there was that in the clear, resolute eyes, modest withal, the strong chin, which appealed to the judgment of the master.

“Who is it, your grace?” he inquired, extend-

ing his right hand, with its lace ruffle, towards Wolfe, who grasped it with that respect which the best of young men ever accord to the old.

“Colonel James Wolfe, sir, whose parents are well known to you as residents of Bath. The Colonel has distinguished himself on the Continent of Europe, in Scotland, and in the difficult and arduous expedition, from which he has but recently returned. We are assured that his future career will redound to the glory of the land from which he has sprung.”

When the Duke began to speak to Beau Nash, Miss Katherine Lowther and her cousin had entered, by a side door, from one of the ante-rooms.

Katherine stood on the threshold looking on and listening to the words of presentation. Her heart throbbed, she could not have told why, as the quiet tones resounded through the lofty chamber.

Her gaze was not noticed, for all eyes were directed towards the scene, which was so unusual in that place, that it seemed specially endowed with interest.

“I am pleased to welcome you, Colonel Wolfe, in your own name and that of your parents, to the city of Bath; may your stay be a pleasant

one; I look to every one here to assist in making it so."

Without intending it the old man's eyes rested for a moment on the fair face of Katherine Lowther; to her it seemed as if he spoke individually.

A blush suffused her cheeks, in contrast to the white column of her throat.

CHAPTER III

A HERO

IF his intimate friends, of both sexes, had been asked to name the most perfect character among the men they knew, they would, without exception, have replied—Lord Dion 'Blair.

Yet he had a failing which marked all his mature years, a failing which affected his whole life, stamped his whole career.

It was self-depreciation.

Modesty is often mistaken for it, but as a fact the two qualities are quite distinct. Lord Dion's attitude towards life, or rather towards the particular sphere in which he moved, was brought about by a distorted sense of his physical disability. Coupled with this was a failure to realise that, in nearly all the essentials of highest manhood, few could compete with him.

He saw the eclipse of his life, but failed to contrast with it the bright shining illumination at the back.

In an assemblage, such as the one he was attending with his friend, he ever betook himself to a quiet corner, where he could observe without being observed ; if, in addition, he could have the companionship of a friend, whose soul was intimate with his own, all the better. It required an effort of the will for him to appear at all in public, but he compelled himself to move occasionally in the thronged orbit of his fellow men ; otherwise he was well aware that the habit of a recluse would only grow upon him, and his mind might become warped and morbid.

After Miss Katherine Lowther and her cousin entered the Assembly Rooms, while the Duke of Bedford was presenting Colonel Wolfe to the Master, Lord Dion at once crossed over to the ladies.

Close to the door, by which they had entered, was a draped alcove, from which everything in the room could be seen, but affording partial obscurity to the guests who stood or sat within it. They would be out of the way of those who promenaded, using the strip of Oriental carpet, for the purpose of passing up and down the hall.

Katherine offered Lord Dion her hand ; he took it in his thin fingers and, bending low, brushed it with his lips, offering a similar

courteous salutation to Miss Lovesay immediately afterwards.

How different can the same thing be when the personality is changed! Lord Dion could not have put into words, would not have attempted to have pictured in his mind what he felt, as he was thus brought into close proximity to Katherine; her beauty radiant before him, the subdued scent of her hair and garments, suggestive of lavender long stored.

To himself, always, he admitted nothing; he analysed not at all, he accepted without daring, or perhaps wishing, to investigate. He was admitted to her friendship, what more could he want or expect?

Instinctively all three of them stepped a little back, so as to be just within the shelter of the alcove. Katherine, after giving and receiving the greeting from Lord Dion, had once more glanced in the direction of the Duke of Bedford and the distinguished group at the end of the room.

She smiled.

Colonel Wolfe was standing, tall, ungainly, with narrow shoulders, his head bent a little forward, to bring himself more on a level with that of Beau Nash, seated in his chair of State. Wolfe carried his embarrassment in his whole attitude;

he shrank from praise at all times, but more especially when it focused all eyes on himself, as it did that night.

“That is the officer you were with just now, Lord Dion, is it not?”

The question was merely an introduction, a *façon de parler*, for Katherine had excellent eyes, which she used to the full, when her interest was excited.

“Yes, he is my greatest *man* friend,” with a stress on the small word of three letters. “I admire him more than any one I have ever met.”

“He is not exactly handsome,” Miss Lovesay commented, with the quizzical look in her eyes expressing so much. “When I saw him in his hat I imagined he would look better without one; now I see him without I am inclined to retract my opinion.”

Lord Dion visibly winced. The cold, harsh criticism hurt him far more than if it had been directed against himself.

“When you know him, Miss Lovesay, as I hope you will, you will be of a different opinion, for you will understand that the casket is of small import in comparison with the jewel within; and a rare jewel, I promise you, is the soul of my friend, James Wolfe.”

"You are a loyal fighter, Lord Dion," Miss Lovesay was constrained to admit.

Katherine had not shared in the conversation ; she was still studying that bowed head, expressive of deference to the old man. Something moved her, something which had first come to her in the brief moments, when she passed across the snow-flecked pavement to the sedan chair. It was an intimate feeling which told her that this officer, for good or evil, for light or darkness, would come into her life.

After a pause, she turned to Lord Dion Blair, as if to obliterate as far as she could the impression her cousin had produced.

"His Grace of Bedford could hardly have spoken in higher terms of any one, and, from the little I know of him, he is not given to exaggeration or overpraise."

In a few words Lord Dion related the circumstance which had brought Wolfe before the notice of the Duke. He added : "I believe with the exception of his father, and his Grace, I am the only one who knows that my friend refused the offer made to him, or, indeed, that it was ever made. Colonel Wolfe stipulated it should remain a secret." Lord Dion smiled ; when he did so his eyes had a curious radiancy, which lit up the whole of his face. "I happened to be

with him when the offer was made ; I urged him to accept it."

"And why, pray?" Miss Lovesay inquired.

"Because I know what he has suffered, and will suffer. I have seen him racked with pain, when he returned from a long march with his troops at Stirling, and later at Aberdeen ; I have known him endure privations which a strong man might in justice shrink from, but which he, who is never in very good health, bore without a murmur. I know, too, something of what he has suffered when I have not been present ; he has spent months at sea a martyr to its attack ; he says, himself, he is the worst sailor in the world. In addition to all this he is a poor man to whom the offer meant wealth and comfort ; was it wrong or unnatural that I should urge him to accept it?"

"Why, then, did he refuse?" Katherine inquired ; yet she knew perfectly.

By this time Wolfe had half turned ; some other presentations were being made, which had released him for the moment from his converse with Mr. Nash. His eye glanced round the room, scanning the gaily-dressed people, who lined both sides of the lofty, majestic chamber ; when he saw the little group in the alcove, a light

shone in his glance which had not been there before.

In lower tones Lord Dion responded to the question just put, while at the same time he looked not at the interlocutor, but in the direction of his friend. "He refused because he could do no other; one day he will show us the stuff of which he is made, we shall all know it, as a few know it now; all England will ring with his name. Between now and then he will suffer, as only great souls in frail bodies can."

The two hearers wondered whether Lord Dion was thinking only of James Wolfe. His eyes had taken on a soft, mystic look, altogether out of keeping with the artificial throng, which beset them on all sides.

There was a pause, during which Wolfe had turned once more towards the Master, who had evidently addressed a remark to him.

It was Miss Lovesay who broke the silence, a silence which was punctuated by the buzzing of conversation from a little group near them.

"Yet the late expedition failed, in which your friend had a conspicuous part!"

Lord Dion's mystic look disappeared at her words; he turned towards her with hot animation

in his eyes, something as nearly like anger as could ever be seen there.

"Yes," he said, "it failed, and failed ignominiously. The great mind which planned the effort has the threads of the whole story in his hands; he knows why it failed; he knows the advice which was given and was disregarded, which would have turned that failure into triumph and success."

"You refer to Mr. William Pitt?" Katherine asked; a question which carried its own answer. .

"Yes, Miss Lowther. There is nothing which happens in any quarter of the globe for the honour of England, or for its dishonour, which is not echoed in St. James's Square, which is not understood in all its bearings by the most famous minister this country has ever had."

"Yet Mr. Wolfe has come home, while the greater part of the army and the fleet have remained." Miss Lovesay pursued her side of the argument, as Katherine shrewdly suspected, to lead Lord Dion on.

"He came home because there is nothing more to be done at present; he is waiting, waiting for a call. That call might come to-night, might come next week; when it comes it will summon him to responsibilities he has never yet been

entrusted with, and he will be ready to take them on his shoulders, to bear them to a successful issue."

"Did the hero himself tell you all this?" Miss Lovesay queried, with sarcastic intonation.

"Angela!" Katherine had flushed with something very like annoyance; she knew, although she was not looking at Colonel Wolfe directly, that he had ended his conversation with Mr. Nash and the Duke of Bedford, and was only waiting the opportunity to make his way in their direction. She could not have told how she knew this, but the fact remained. She felt he must know what her cousin was saying. "Why do you talk in this way? You know you do not intend to hurt Lord Dion's feelings, nor do you really mean what you say."

Blair looked at her, appreciating the way she had taken up the cudgels on his behalf. "The gleam in her eyes, the heightened colour in her cheeks, had imparted to her that added flavour of animation, which was all she required to make her beauty complete, commanding."

Colonel Wolfe could see all that was going on clearly; without knowing the cause, he noted the result. He had admired Katherine when she had been bonneted and cloaked, when her beauty

was half concealed. Now that he saw her in a gown which set off the contour of her neck and shoulders, the slimness of her waist, her abundant hair gathered into a coronet on her head, with one tress falling down upon her left shoulder, dark contrasting with the whiteness on which it rested, he knew that never in his life had he admired womanhood so much. The intensity of his gaze drew Katherine's glance in his direction.

Their eyes met; then the girl veiled hers under their lashes, and, turning half away, listened once more to what Lord Dion was saying.

"Not a word of what I have said came to me from my friend himself. He writes to me his impressions of a campaign as it proceeds, but of his part in it, his own exploits, I can only judge by reading between the lines. What I have told you I know from a high authority."

Mr. Pitt had been for many years an annual visitor to Bath for the sake of the waters. He mingled but little in its life. The same haughty air of aloofness, which was his well-known characteristic in the House of Commons, he carried likewise into his private life. With the exception of his brother-in-law, Lord Temple, there were few men admitted to his confidence.

Lord Dion was one of the exceptions. Pitt

had realised his nobility of soul, the sterling character which was half concealed beneath that shrinking, modest exterior.

For, above all things, Pitt knew a man when he saw one, read him to his inmost soul. Whether it was this influence which had, in the first place, brought the young soldier into the notice of the great statesman cannot be asserted ; but, doubtless, the estimate which Lord Dion had formed, by intimate acquaintance, was conveyed to Pitt, and strengthened the good report which the Minister had already received.

At a sign from Mr. Nash, the band, which supplied the music for the dancing, started keying the various instruments.

There was a stir in the room, the buzz of expectation. The Duke of Beaufort was advancing towards the Countess of Suffolk, with a view to leading her out for a minuet. Precedence ordered the day at the commencement, the highest in rank taking the centre of the saloon. The Duke of Bedford had ceded his place to the friend with whom he was staying, as a mild attack of gout, together with advancing age, precluded his taking an individual part.

Taking advantage of the movement thus made,

Wolfe began to make his way towards the two ladies and his friend Lord Dion.

Seeing this, Dion said : “ Kindly regard our recent conversation as confidential, Miss Love-say. I should not like a word of it to come to Colonel Wolfe’s ears.”

CHAPTER IV

A PRESENTATION

A MURMUR of appreciation, almost amounting to applause, passed round the assemblage.

Beau Nash had a clear space, kept by the attendants, in front of him, so that he could see all that went on. A look of intense satisfaction appeared on his face, smoothing away the haggard lines, which even a lavish application of powder failed to conceal.

It was certainly one of the most fashionable attendances Bath had ever enjoyed during the fifty years of Nash's reign. He knew there was a personal, subtle element in it; that these men and women, most of them born to high estate, had made a point of being present in his honour, as a response to the rumours and calumnies, which had been rife during the last few months. The old man recognised that his reign was drawing to a close, but its sunset was as resplendent as its noon had been brilliant.

Here were gathered great ladies, like the

Countess of Bristol, Lady Mary Montague, Lady Essex, Lady Irwin, and the Honourable Celia Fiennes; peers, like Lord Chesterfield, Lord Essex, and Lord Fitzwilliam, with baronets of old creation and their ladies, wits like Gay and Quin, Smollett and Fielding.

The ball-room itself was nearly ninety feet long and thirty broad. The waxed floor in the centre was left free to the dancers, while the sides, alcoves, and balconies were given up to spectators, and those who awaited their turn to take part in the dancing.

The murmur of appreciation was evoked by the majestic and distinguished appearance of the pair, upon whom fell the distinction of opening the evening's entertainment.

The Duke of Beaufort was dressed in the full robes of the Grand Cross of the Bath, red mantle, crimson surcoat, vest and knee-breeches of white satin, white silk stockings, and shoes ornamented with gold buckles. Round his neck was the gold collar of the Order, and the star blazed on his breast. In his hand he carried his plumed hat, which he shifted from right to left, as the evolutions of the minuet demanded first one hand free, then the other.

His *vis-à-vis*, Henrietta Howard, Countess of Suffolk, was noted as the fairest of fair women,

the marble pallor of her throat and arms contrasting with the maroon velvet, which she wore as a short cloak, fastened to her corsage by a brooch of magnificent diamonds. Her stomacher was decked with seed-pearls and tightly laced, exhibiting her fine figure and supple waist, while her small feet with their dainty shoes peeped out in all the mazes of the dance.

This pair were both fine exponents of the most graceful of all exercises; to watch them was an education in the highest breeding.

Lady Suffolk carried an ivory fan, which she shifted from hand to hand, in response to the Duke's signal, as he moved his hat from one grasp to the other.

When the minuet was over, and the two, who had taken part in it, had bowed and curtsied to one another, until the very ground was swept by the skirt of the one and the plumed hat of the other, a murmur of approval rose once more into the air, even louder and more expressive than it had been at the beginning.

During the dance the whole company had remained stationary. Under cover of the rustle and movement which followed, Wolfe managed to make his way to Lord Dion's side.

According to the unwritten law which governed these assemblages, dancing was now more general.

Wolfe had just reached the party to which he directed his steps, when both Catherine and her cousin were claimed by respective partners.

“I will present you to my friends, James,” Lord Dion said, “when they return here, as they probably will. This is a favourite corner of Miss Lowther’s, to which she generally betakes herself when not dancing. I want you to secure her hand as soon as she is free; you will find her an accomplished partner.”

“She may not be satisfied with me.”

Lord Dion shook his head. “You know dancing is one of your virtues; I am anxious that Miss Lowther should appreciate what you can do.” Then he went on, with a shrug of his shoulders, “So that my friend may partly compensate for my deficiency.”

Wolfe knew well the shadow, which darkened the brilliance of his friend’s eyes as he spoke, and the cause of it.

“You have never afforded yourself the opportunity, Dion, or I am very sure your fine ear for music would have brought you out triumphant.”

“Yes, amidst the jeers and sneers of this fine throng, which would be reflected on the face of my partner. Thank you, I have learnt to school myself to bear anything standing alone; but

when it comes to inflicting discredit upon another, especially when that other is a beautiful girl, from that idea I draw back absolutely."

"I think you misjudge the sex, of which I must confess I myself know little."

"And I a great deal," Lord Blair said, with unusual assertion. "While you have been studying tactics in camp and battle-field, I have perforce been thrown back upon the science of ball-room and promenade. I envy you your part in the drama of life, although I rejoice in it, too, because it is yours. I feel that in your name I lead the charge, I win renown; I am content to shine in the reflected honours your sword carves for itself."

"You envy me!" Wolfe cried. "Yet surely there is another side to the shield. Here am I, only just over the threshold of early manhood, sometimes hardly knowing how to lift my head from the pillow, jealous of the brute strength of the soldier who does my bidding, of the men who look to me to lead them into the breach; without friends, without money, seeing the blunders, the vacillations, the mistakes of those officers of higher rank than my own, under whom I am compelled to serve. Is mine an enviable lot, think you?"

"Those are but temporary accidents of your

career, the clouds which for the moment darken the sunrise. The day will come out ere long bright and clear, when the man who, thank God, is at the helm of this great country will call you to do his bidding, and that of no one else; when he will show you what he wants to have done, and will trust you to do it."

The words had been uttered *sotto voce*, so that no one near should hear them, but in tones of deep conviction.

When the conversation began, Wolfe's eyes had been dull and downcast; now he raised his head proudly, with the gleam of hope and coming battle expressed in the fire of his glance.

"I wish I could believe you a true prophet, Dion, as you are best and truest of friends."

"You can rely upon what I have said, for I am a prophet who speaks from foreknowledge, quite as much as foreseeing."

"You have done me more good than all the waters I shall drink in this fair city of Bath, and I thank you for it."

As Wolfe spoke he saw Katherine Lowther advancing towards them, resting her fingers in those of her cavalier, Lord John Lennox. She was looking in their direction, and had noted with her quick eyes the effect of Lord Dion's words, of which she had not heard a syllable.

Something curious, defying analysis, expressed itself in her face as she looked from Dion to Wolfe, then back again. If the look conveyed anything, it seemed to say that there were some problems in life beyond her solution, some wrongs she would have righted, had it been in her power.

But the rôle of Providence had been denied to her.

There was an expression on Lord John Lennox's face which conveyed a great deal to the two men, who watched his progress up the room, and that of the girl he was escorting. It was something more than courtesy, something deeper and more subtle than deference; it suggested a high-mettled horse, so well trained and broken in that all exuberance was restrained. But the very act of restraint, the effort of will, made itself apparent.

Wolfe, who knew very little of women, but who was a shrewd observer of men, had little difficulty in reading the signs of the times. The least encouragement would have turned Lord John into an ardent lover of the partner at his side, but the encouragement was not forthcoming.

Lord Dion, glancing at his friend, knew he understood; he shrugged his thin shoulders. "There is nothing remarkable about that," he

said ; " Lord John is only one of many, not only in Bath, but in the north of England. But the lady will not have it so."

Yet Lord John was a man of fine, upstanding figure, fair, handsome face, soldierly bearing, who might well have attracted a favourable glance from any lady.

Wolfe wondered what was the solution of the enigma. •

Katherine was close to them by this time, her face flushed with the energy of dancing, her eyes bright and shining. She did not at all suggest a woman of cold, unsympathetic character, without the natural instincts, which have moved the world of men and women throughout the length of history.

When they came close to the alcove, Lord John released her fingers, which had been resting but lightly, and, stepping back, bowed gracefully, thanking her audibly for the honour she had done him.

Angela Lovesay came up at the same moment, but stood for a moment a few paces off, talking to her late partner.

" May I present Colonel James Wolfe, Miss Lowther? " Lord Dion's tones vibrated ; unintentionally on his part he conveyed a sense of importance to the mere formality of the presenta-

tion. His tones seemed to say, "You are no ordinary people, and this is no ordinary occasion."

Wolfe kissed the fingers presented to him. "You will, I hope, do me the pleasure of giving me the honour of your hand in a dance later on?"

"I am afraid all but one are promised." She smiled. "The fact is we generally meet at one of the coffee-houses in the morning when the weather is unfavourable, or in the meadows by the river if the sun shines. The arrangements for the ensuing night are more often than not made at these informal meetings. These dances take place twice in the week."

"Nevertheless, there is the possibility of my having one dance, you kindly hinted, Miss Lowther."

There was a persistence in his tone which suggested a man, who had never faced a difficulty without determining to overcome it.

Katherine looked at him with smiling eyes, and he realised more than ever how much of her beauty was independent of feature—was a matter of expression, of the shining of the soul through the eyes, of character influence, a beauty which endures.

As she did not speak he pressed her for an answer.

“Why do you smile?”

“I am not sure whether you will care for the only dance I have at my disposal. Besides,” she added, with a little ripple of laughter, “there are conditions.”

Lord Dion had stepped back, leaving these two free to talk without being overheard. The shadow of the curtain lay across his face; the brightness had fallen away like a mask; he looked strangely old, worn, haggard.

“Why this doubt of my inclination? Is the dance beyond my powers?”

“No, it is simplicity itself; it was invented or adapted by Mr. Nash. It is a ‘*contredance*,’ like ‘Sir Roger de Coverley’; that is, each couple takes its place *vis-à-vis*, helping to form two lines. All the first part is in accordance with the customary steps. When this is completed, the man at the furthest end of the row steps out, and dances alone up the centre, followed by his partner, each couple proceeding after the same fashion. They circle round until the band gives a signal, when the order is reversed, and each lady leads, her cavalier following.” She smiled again. “Mr. Nash has called the dance ‘Pursuit.’ It ends with an arch made by the leading file, their fingers entwined, while all the rest pass beneath.”

"It sounds most attractive, Miss Lowther. But you hinted at conditions?"

"The gentleman must not be over thirty-five, and the ladies must not exceed ten years less."

It was Wolfe's turn to smile now, and it made him look younger.

"I am safely within the limit," he averred. He felt sure she had doubted it, for, indeed, his years of hard soldiering, as well as his ill-health, had given him the appearance of an age more advanced than was really the case.

The evening proceeded apace, until at half-past ten the last dance was announced by the head steward.

Never before had James Wolfe led out a partner with anything akin to the feeling, which surged in his veins, as he handed Katherine Lowther down the saloon. She knew, although he did not until later, that upon them was to fall the duty of forming the living arch, under which twelve couples would pass to its conclusion. In a maze, but with considerable skill, Wolfe did his part, exhibiting a grace in dancing for which the girl was not prepared.

At length they were facing one another, their right arms uplifted. Katherine's loose sleeve fell back, showing the whole contour, the shapely form and whiteness of her arm almost to her

shoulder. Wolfe's clasp had to be a firm one, as occasionally the dancers brushed against their hands, with a risk of their losing hold.

Standing in this way he lost himself in the enjoyment which his senses provided. He thought neither of past nor future; the present delightful moment was all sufficient.

CHAPTER V

A WINTER NIGHT

SNOW had ceased falling, but the night was pitch-dark, when, punctually at eleven o'clock, the company issued forth from the doors of the Assembly Rooms.

Link boys were rushing in all directions, carrying their flaming torches; servants with lanterns waited for their employers. Coach succeeded sedan chair, and sedan chair in its turn made way for some other equipage.

Colonel Wolfe and Lord Dion escorted Miss Lowther and her cousin, handing them into the chair which was in waiting. After a short pause, during which they stood fully cloaked, Lord Dion said—

“Then we shall meet to-morrow morning at Colgrave’s coffee-house?”

“Yes, at ten of the clock punctually,” Miss Lowther assented.

The arrangement had been made a few minutes earlier, when the ladies were about to leave for the cloak-room to get their wraps.

Colgrave's was a fashionable resort at one end of the Orange Grove.

Their sedan chair was borne away rapidly. Two menservants in the livery of Sir James Lowther, carrying lanterns, ran on either side of the chair.

Wolfe and his friend followed at a slower pace, their arms linked. As they reached the end of the street Lord Dion said—

“Will you not return with me for an hour?”

“No, thank you. My father promised to sit up till I returned. I have hardly exchanged a word with him since my arrival.”

They shook hands, Lord Dion turning off towards his own house, while Wolfe followed in the direction the sedan chair had taken a few minutes previously, for, as previously mentioned, his father and Sir James Lowther—when the latter was in Bath, which was not the case at the present—were next-door neighbours.

One of Lord Dion's servants was walking in front of him, carrying a lantern, his master, heavily cloaked against the keen wind, following at a deliberate pace. On any other occasion Blair would have allowed the man, who had been in his service for several years, to walk by his side, and would have conversed with him, but to-night he preferred to proceed in solitary fashion.

The collar of his cloak was turned up about his ears, only his face being exposed. Brightly he had bid good-bye to his friend James Wolfe. Very different his face would appear now had there been any one to see it. His eyes were downcast, a pallor greater than usual, lines, crow's-feet, seemed to add years to his age. There was, too, a set look about his mouth, a grim determination.

Lord Dion's happiest moments were those which he spent in the company of the two or three people, to whom he gave a very sincere friendship. His saddest and darkest moments were the periods of solitude, when he shouldered his burden, until his neck was bowed beneath the weight.

To-night, with the crisp snow under his feet, the darkling sky overhead, and coming fresh from the brilliant scene in the fine ball-room, the yawning gulf of his life seemed more fearsome, more to be dreaded than it had ever been. He was going to his solitary chambers, in a lonely building, all his own, with no one but housekeeper and servants to welcome him. The housekeeper, Mrs. Geith, had been with him as nurse immediately after the disaster had occurred, which had ruined his physique and marred his whole after-life. It was undoubtedly due to her care that the

frail child had lived through those days, months, years of anxiety. Her care had been unremitting, her devotion intense. One would have said such as only a Scotswoman can offer to one not of her blood.

Sometimes Dion was tempted to say, "Would to God she had never succeeded in her fostering vigilance! Would that he had died in those early unconscious years, before he realised the legacy of suffering, mental even more than physical, which his misfortune entailed!" He was shut out from all the pursuits and occupations for which his whole being yearned. Perhaps his friendship for James Wolfe grew out of, or at any rate was stimulated by, a longing to play a similar part in the world. He felt in a curious way that his soul and that of the fiery, intrepid young officer were fused together, linked by the same spirit; that Wolfe was engaged in doing what his own courage would have effected, had his body been fitted for marshal service.

It was a thing to be remarked, because it afforded a key to much that may seem mysterious to readers of these pages, and to students of life. Perhaps such a feeling as Lord Dion had is almost unique in the story of souls, but it is true nevertheless, and, being true, has a bearing on all that he did.

brother and her cousin; but Lord Dion understood that on one subject a woman always preserves an inviolable secrecy.

He felt sure those qualities in James Wolfe, which he most admired, would appeal to Katherine after a similar fashion. He knew her high-souled spirit, her appreciation of greatness in the best sense of the word, her fine fire of patriotism. Pitt came to Bath often. He owed to it some measure of alleviation from the pains which sapped his vitality, and too frequently rendered him a physical wreck. He had inspired in the neighbourhood, as indeed he had throughout England, a belief in the future of the nation he was called upon to govern.

Deep had been the abyss into which the national pride had fallen. It could only be measured, looking back, by the heights to which the country hoped to ascend.

The genius of this young girl, so highly born and placed, had been touched to a pre-eminent degree by this afflatus of patriotism.

To all this Wolfe would make an appeal, which Lord Dion believed would be irresistible. The meeting so long hoped for and planned had taken place between the two. The effect upon the man was obvious; the effect on the woman was more than probable.

Lord Dion had succeeded.

And yet! And yet!——

His face betrayed his feelings, betrayed the battle that was being waged within. It told a story of conflict, of spirit fighting spirit, in which the laceration of the wounds approached to the agony of death.

The finer the spirit, the more highly tuned the psychical nature, the greater is the capacity for pain.

It was but a short walk between the Assembly Rooms and that house in the Circus where Dion Blair lived solitary, but it was long enough to create and leave behind it an indelible impression on his sensitive soul.

His face, as has been said, indicated what was going on within, but fortunately there was no one to see it, and no light to see it by, even if some one had passed close to him. The darkness shrouded him, except for the flickering rays of the lantern which his manservant carried, some half-dozen paces in front.

The darkness of the night was emblematic of the mental cloud which dimmed the brightness of his fine eyes, which bowed his misshapen back, making him stagger sometimes, almost as if he were some reveller lurching home from the tavern.

It was with intense relief that Lord Dion saw his manservant open the door of the well-lighted hall, and step back to give his master place to enter first.

The road home had been a *via dolorosa*, a *via crucis*. He had endured, but he had not faltered in his determination, for his was the kind of nature which crucifies itself.

CHAPTER VI

FATHER AND SON

SIR JAMES LOWTHER'S house adjoined that of General Wolfe, in Queen's Square.

After parting with his friend, Colonel Wolfe proceeded towards his domicile at a rapid pace, the pace which was characteristic of the man.

To reach his father's door he had to pass the mansion from which he had seen Katherine Lowther and her cousin issue a few hours earlier. How much had been compressed of experience, of feeling, of new sensations into that interval! He had not had time to analyse his impressions : that would come later.

Two of the upper windows showed illumination behind the white blinds, which were drawn down. He did not doubt but that they indicated the chambers, in which the ladies were retiring to rest. He wondered which belonged to Katherine. Something seemed to tell him that she was in the room

on the right-hand side, which adjoined his father's house.

He had hardly mounted the three or four steps leading to the front door, when the latter opened. General Wolfe stood, candlestick in hand, to welcome his son.

"I was listening for your footsteps, James. I heard the chair arrive next door, and thought you would not be long afterwards." The General shivered slightly, although he was attired in a long, fur-lined dressing-robe. "Come in out of the cold; the wind is cutting."

The son entered the house, embraced his father, then closed the door behind them.

General Wolfe led the way into the dining-room. A cold collation was spread at one end of the table. Two cups of chocolate were steaming upon the hob, which flanked the wide fireplace.

James came up to the hearth, and stretching out his long, thin hands, warmed them at the fire, after removing a pair of gauntlets, and throwing them on a sidetable.

The General stood looking at him, while different expressions flitted across his face. Pride in the son was uppermost. Anxiety came next in seeing how worn he looked, realising that the fine spirit within was consuming the outer shell of the body.

There was a resemblance between the two men, between father and son, enough to indicate the relationship; but the General in outward appearance was by far the finer man, of more commanding stature, broader across the chest, with a face which was still handsome. Yet there was something about the son which compensated for the lack of physical endowments, possessed by his father and denied to him; his tense attitude, even when in repose, even when occupied, as at this moment, in apparently trivial things, suggested the driving-force, which struck all who were brought into relationship with him, alike those who served under him, and those who were his superior officers.

“Your mother left her ‘love and good-night.’ She retires early, while I sit here night after night and think ”—he smiled—“mainly of you, James.”

The son did not speak, but he half turned his face and shot a glance at his father, expressive of admiration and affection. Probably no men occupying the same relative position have ever been more perfect comrades than these two.

It was an age in which filial affection between parent and child was conspicuously exemplified. Contemporary instances will occur to most

people. But even in this category General Wolfe and his son shine in a mellow glory above the rest. A short time before this, when his son's claims were ignored by the highest powers of the land, he had offered to give up his colonelcy in the Marines to make way for James, a proposal, needless to say, which the son would not entertain for a single instant.

"You will be glad of some chocolate after your walk, James."

"Thank you, father."

"I reserved mine, to have it with you."

Both men had taken up their cups.

"I have had my supper, but you will not mind taking some while I look on," General Wolfe continued.

"Thank you, father. I am not inclined to eat anything. As you know better than I, war teaches us to do with few meals and scanty rations."

"Yet you look as if you would be better for a more generous diet."

James sipped his chocolate, then shook his head. "I do not think any dieting will ever make old bones of me, or endow them with an extra covering of flesh. I am one of Pharaoh's lean kine," he added, with a whimsical smile.

“Yet, if I remember rightly, they ate up the fat and well-favoured ones.”

“I believe that’s right, but the illustration will not bear pressing.”

“I have not had an opportunity of congratulating you on the tardy honour the king has conferred upon you, by making you a full colonel. Is it contingent upon your going to Ireland? ” •

“No, there are other projects on foot, of which I have had a hint.”

“You have seen Mr. Pitt? ” General Wolfe spoke with an air of indifference, but his real anxiety and interest were impossible to conceal.

“Yes, I saw him for a few minutes. He wanted my personal opinion of the failure of the late expedition. I had to confess that I thought, had my plan been carried out, the issue would have been different. I made as little of it as I could, but in his own closet there can be no beating about the bush. His eyes draw the truth out of a man like a magnet attracting steel.”

“It will go hardly with Sir John Mordaunt, I suppose? ”

Both the men looked very serious, for the commander of the unfortunate late expedition against Rochefort was the personal and intimate friend

of the family, and James Wolfe junior had been proud to serve under him.

“The responsibility was not wholly his, as I tried to point out to Mr. Pitt. The fleet was as much to blame as the army.”

“Yet Sir John ought to have succeeded?”

James did not answer. His brow was clouded, his eyes downcast, almost as if his own personal honour were in question.

General Wolfe understood this silence more pregnant than any words. After a pause, he said, “Mr. Pitt is not daunted by failure?”

“On the contrary, he is spurred to fresh endeavour.”

General Wolfe, having finished his chocolate, helped himself to a pinch of snuff from a handsome presentation box, given by the officers of his regiment.

“You do not know when you are likely to receive fresh orders?”

“Mr. Pitt’s parting injunction to me”—James Wolfe lifted his head with a proud gesture—“I do not think he considered the injunction necessary—was, ‘You will hold yourself in readiness for a call at any moment. Next year will be a memorable one in the history of England, if I mistake not.’ I bowed, and said that I was at his service any hour, night or day. I

have duly informed him of my presence in Bath, and of the date of my return to Exeter."

"How long are you giving us?"

"I mentioned the 5th of January."

General Wolfe looked pleased. "That is longer than I thought."

"Yes, but it may be months before I am again free." He went on with a wry smile, "Officers who are prepared to do their duty are kept at work, whether they have earned rest or not, while the others, the fine gentlemen-soldiers, with friends in high places, are more often in St. James's Street and the Mall than they are in camp."

"Mr. Pitt will see to all that."

"Mr. Pitt will do his best; but the odds against him are enormous. He has fought my battle, and won with His Majesty, but I am given to understand, that the struggle in the royal closet nearly led to an open rupture."

"Have you any idea to what part of the world you may be sent?"

"I know Mr. Pitt regards America as the key of the position, and that he will not be content until he wrests that country from the hands of the French."

General Wolfe looked gloomy. "It is an undertaking," he said, "of the first magnitude,

in the pursuit of which already many thousands of lives have been sacrificed, and great reputations smirched."

"Yet he will win, and the New World will redress the balance of the Old. When the flag of England flies over the Citadel of Quebec, a new era will have dawned."

"*When!*"

"It will come, father; whether you or I will live to see it, I do not know." As he spoke, the vision which had brightened his eyes and straightened his shoulders seemed to die away. Once again he looked the man who had sacrificed health, strength, youth in the strenuous life of battle-field and bivouac.

The father's heart was wrung for him. "It is time you went to bed," he said. "You are weary."

James stood up. "I have visions sometimes," he said; "visions of glory, then of rest. I see myself once more at home, with a wife and children; battles past, won, myself honoured."

"I believe those visions will come true." The father laid a hand on his son's shoulder, with a touch which amounted to a caress.

James shook his head. "I more often see the other side of the medal: myself dying on some far-distant shore, laid to rest in an alien soil,

while a volley from those who have served under me pronounces my requiem.”

They were the last words of the night, Colonel Wolfe taking his candle and slowly mounting the stairs; his father remaining to put out the lights.

CHAPTER VII

HIS MOTHER

EIGHT o'clock was striking from a heavy framed oaken timepiece, in the entrance hall, when Colonel Wolfe descended on the following morning. His parents had breakfasted a full hour earlier. James had not found the wooing of sleep an easy thing when he retired to rest. As a rule, even in the most exciting movements of a campaign, he had only to put his head on pillow or bolster, or whatever rough substitute he might have in their stead, to drop off to sleep at once. It was one of his gifts, which stood him in good stead during his short life of soldierly hardships. But after his return from the Assembly Rooms, and the conversation with his father, his usual good luck had deserted him. He lived again the events of the evening. He tried to picture a future, dim and indistinct as clouds before the dawn.

Mrs. Wolfe was coming from the still-room

when she heard her son's footsteps on the uncarpeted, polished stairs. From her waist dangled a bunch of keys, which jingled as she moved hastily across the floor towards him. She was a spare woman, of middle height, with something of the same peculiarity of feature, which was more pronounced in the Colonel. On her head was a frilled and starched cap, with mauve ribbons tied under her chin. A lace collar covered her shoulders.

Pride and affection were expressed clearly in her eyes.

James kissed her affectionately several times on both cheeks, while she wound her arms round his neck. Intense affection bound the two together in the closest of ties. Throughout his life, whether on the Continent of Europe, on the Canadian coast, or in remote districts of Scotland—in those days almost more inaccessible than the other two places—correspondence passed regularly between mother and son.

That morning, for the first time, James felt a guilty consciousness that some one else had been in his thoughts, during the time he had been dressing, and even when his foot rested on the top stair. Through the walls in his bedroom he could hear the sound of movement, the stir of life from the contiguous house. Not to be

differentiated even by his abnormal gift of hearing, but sufficient to rouse his imagination.

The impression of the last evening had by no means worn off or grown attenuated by the coming of the morning, as so often happens in the experience of both men and women. The judgment of the dawn is, as a rule, cold and quiet compared with the exuberance of view which the evening hours bring with them. .

“We did not wait breakfast for you, James, as I know you are about to drink the waters, and that must come first. The hours ~~for~~ it will be nearly up by the time you reach the Pump-room.”

“I intended to have been there at seven o’clock, but I slept late, to compensate for the loss of rest when I first went to bed.”

Mrs. Wolfe was holding her son by the shoulders, looking up into his face with shrewd, penetrating gaze. “That is an unusual thing with you, my boy. I hope nothing untoward occurred to disturb you—no quarrel?”

He laughed. “Are not swords taboo under the rule of Mr. Nash?”

“Yes, and thank God for it. It is one of the edicts for which I honour him. There are other directions in which his influence has been for harm.”



Wolfe and his Mother

Colonel Wolfe did not press his mother to go further into the matters upon which she touched, as time was short, and he well knew her sentiments on the vice of gambling, which had ruined not a few women, as well as men, in Bath during the present reign.

“No, there was nothing to disturb the harmony of last evening—in fact, quite the contrary—but think what a change for your son to pass from the ill-furnished barracks of Exeter to the Assembly Rooms here, filled with the gayest throng possible! Well might it drive sleep into the background, for did not His Grace of Bedford himself introduce me to the Master of Ceremonies with such laudatory terms as I am never likely really to merit; then to look on at the grace and beauty, the elegance and fashion of the room engaged in dancing?”

“Did you take no part yourself? There are few men who can better you in that accomplishment!”

“You flatter me, mother, in that, as in all other matters, exalting me to a pinnacle on which it would make me giddy to stand. I looked on most of the time, but took part in the last dance, which was, I understand, of Mr. Nash’s devising.”

“Was it called ‘the Pursuit’?”

“That was the name; it was expressive of the evolutions in which we were engaged.”

“Ah!—and your partner?”

James knew that those eyes, which were fixed upon his, read him like a book. He had been expecting some such question, yet, as the point of attack touched him, he betrayed a certain amount of confusion. The rapier of his mother’s shrewd query had gone home.

“I danced with Miss Katherine Lowther.”

“Then you were well mated, for you had the most beautiful and best young girl in Bath as your partner.”

“It is given to all men to see the sun sometimes, to bask in its rays, but they must not forget that night follows the day, and that clouds, as often as not, obscure the brilliance of the noon-tide.”

Mrs. Wolfe smiled. “You know what Master Shakespeare says?—

“She’s beautiful, and therefore to be woo’d;
She is a woman, therefore to be won.”

Colonel Wolfe shook his head. “I am a soldier, mother. There is only one woman to whom I can offer my dutiful love, and she has had it ever since I can remember.”

“Nay, the time will surely come when I shall yield my first place to another, and that gladly,

provided she be worthy of the best son in the world."

"That time is far distant, if ever ; but I must be going." He kissed her again.

"Do you return here immediately after you have drunk the waters? "

"No. I have promised Dion Blair to accompany him to Colgrave's coffee-house." After a pause, an appreciable hesitation, he added : "The ladies next door are to be of the party."

"Then, the sun shines this morning, after the snow of yesterday."

James shook his head again, but laughed as he gathered his cloak more closely round his shoulders.

The morning was keen and bright, the streets swept clear. Mrs. Wolfe stood for a moment or two watching her son make his way up the street.

"I wonder," she thought. "I wonder." Then she added, "I could wish nothing better."

CHAPTER VIII

AN INTIMATE LETTER

THE early morning sun was flooding the streets of Bath, as Colonel Wolfe walked along towards the Pump-room. The light almost dazzled his eyes as the rays shot athwart his face.

He felt in a state of mental confusion, in which wholly discordant thoughts jostled one another for supremacy in his mind. He had come to Bath to see his parents, well knowing that the time would necessarily be short, before he would be sent off again across the world. He was also glad to take an opportunity of drinking the waters, which were supposed to be specially beneficial in the gouty condition, which had attacked him early in life, as it had his friend and patron, William Pitt.

He had arrived with two topics of nearly equal importance demanding his attention. One was the record of failure in which Sir John Mordaunt had been involved; the other those projects, which he knew to be stirring in the mind of

the great statesman, to redress the mistakes of the past.

As regards the latter topic, it is impossible now to look back upon that year of disaster—1757—without intense admiration being evoked for the man who faced it with calm courage, determined to build upon the ruins of the past the brilliant edifice of the future. To Wolfe, who was admitted into the intimacy of Pitt, the hero-worship brought about was intense.

Here in brief is the record of that terrible time. The Duke of Cumberland, who had proved himself no mean soldier in the past, had been utterly routed by the French, when in command of a composite army of picked English, German, and Hanoverian troops. In America Montcalm had captured the important strategic post of Fort William Henry, a disaster to the English arms, which had been accentuated by a massacre, carried out by the Indian allies of the French, which had rung throughout the length and breadth of the Home Country. To crown all this had come the failure of the force, under Sir John Mordaunt and Admiral Hawke, to capture Rochefort and Havre.

Colonel Wolfe squared his shoulders, and accepted the beautiful dawn of the December

day, contrasting it with the darkness of the afternoon, when he had arrived at Bath, as an augury of the future. The sun of England would assuredly arise, the disgrace of the past be wiped out, the lessons of failure having taught them the principles of success.

Now there came into his mind, against his will, all unbidden, a fresh thought, a new idea. He had come into Bath a whole-hearted soldier, of whom it had been said, by one of his severest critics, that "to him danger was the favourable moment to call forth his talents." -

A few hours had enlarged and altered his vision. He had seen what he was assuredly not looking for—a perfect woman. Even now, pacing the streets under such very different conditions, he lived again the scenes in the ball-room. He felt his fingers closing on her hand, as he led her to the dance. He saw her combining with himself in making a living arch, under which the other couples had passed. He had looked into her liquid eyes, clear as crystal, steadfast, true, indicative of the character which lay behind them, the perfect oval of her face, the tress of hair resting on her white shoulder; the symmetry of her arm, so moulded that it might well have formed a model for a sculptor of ancient Greece. He had striven to banish

any personal thought from his mind. Although his pathway had not lain in any extent among the assemblages of the great, he had at intervals been brought into contact with the fair daughters of the highest in the land. Yet none of these had created more than a passing attraction, with one exception. That single episode served to throw into bold relief the true feeling he knew well Katherine Lowther could arouse.

Then his mother's words came to him, which had fitted into the feeling he was striving to overcome.

Now he had reached the Pump-room. Crowds were issuing from the porticoes, for the hour of closing for the day was at hand. Devotees, as a rule, arrived early, some even at six o'clock, as soon as the doors were open. By the time James Wolfe mounted the steps it was half-past eight. He was among the last to receive the hot, nauseous beverage from one of the attendants.

As he sipped from the glass, he looked round for his friend Dion Blair, whom he had expected to find in the Rooms; he was not to be seen. Possibly he was ill; in that case what should he himself do? The ladies would be expecting them at the rendezvous when ten o'clock struck. Should he go alone? It were rude to disappoint

them. At the same time a strange diffidence held him back from a solitary encounter. Katherine influenced him, as he had never been stirred before, by her grace and beauty. The other lady made him self-conscious by her mordant wit and sarcastic humour.

It was with relief, that a few minutes before nine, he saw his friend enter, and make his way towards him.

"I was so afraid you were not coming," Wolfe greeted him.

"Do I often break my engagements?"

"No; but every one is liable to illness. I thought perhaps the weather might have tried you, the chill wind of last night."

"Had that been so, I should have sent you word. The fact is, an important dispatch reached me early, and as the messenger waited, I had to reply to it at once. I was compelled to forgo drinking the waters, but knew I should be in ample time for our next appointment."

The band struck up the final piece of the morning's programme, so conversation was interrupted between the friends. Lord Dion was not sorry, for the letter he had received had to do principally with Colonel Wolfe; it was of a confidential nature, and could not therefore be imparted. At the present moment the letter

lay in the pocket of Lord Dion's heavy overcoat, and ran as follows—

“MY DEAR LORD DION,

“This is to inform you that I am safely arrived from Hayes, in St. James's Square, where there is much forward, to occupy me, at the present time. This affair of the failure of the last expedition to ravage the coast of France has caused not a little cavilling, and disquietude to myself. There are those who accuse me of wasting time, money, and men, although, God knows few of the last were sacrificed, owing to the *caution* of the General in command; some might call it by a harsher name. If the matter had succeeded, after the fashion in which it was planned, those who now complain would have been ready to take some credit to themselves for *any* small part they might have taken in fitting out the expedition. However, this does not move me, for I have private intelligence that the King of France and his Ministers were seriously alarmed, and in consequence had to divert a portion of the army, destined for the German border, towards the coast of France instead.

“One thing, my lord, I am determined upon, and intend to carry out at all hazards. I am done with all this talk of seniority, this pressing of

claims to command by reason of rank. I have told the Duke (Newcastle) this quite plainly during the last few days, and have ventured to speak my mind in the Highest Quarters.

“*They dare not frustrate me*, much as they may wish to do so, for they know I am the only man who can save this realm, and that the people of England have trust in me, and in no one else.

“I am fully purposed to select my own men for certain great projects which I have in hand. This matter nearly concerns your friend, Colonel James Wolfe, of the 20th, for whom, as you are aware, I destine an important share in the designs now in contemplation. Admiral Hawke has spoken very handsomely of the Colonel’s conduct in the recent campaign, and is of an opinion that if his original plan had been carried out, all would have been well. I am thankful that there are such men in the service of this country. It will not be my fault if they do not find work, and advancement.

“This is written to one in whom I have every confidence, that he will regard what I have put down as of a private nature. I am glad to say at present my health remains moderately good, but I have no doubt that when this business is dispatched, and I am free from attendance in London I shall again avail myself of the bene-

ficent waters of your beautiful city. By that time I hope to be able to give you more satisfactory information.

“Until then, believe me, ever your faithful friend,

“WILLIAM PITT.”

James Wolfe and Dion Blair left the Pump-room, after the former had partaken the prescribed quantity of water. They were the last to go. The sun was already exerting its full power, turning the snow, which had collected on the roofs and eaves of the houses, into water, which was dripping down on to the pavements below.

The friends took to the middle of the road to avoid the stream. Wolfe felt an exhilaration in the bright, crisp air, a feeling which was by no means common to his somewhat morbid, and introspective mind. The anxieties which had pressed upon him, when he first left his father's house, were dispelled. He was with the friend most congenial to him. No immediate duties pressed for his attention. He was about to meet a personality, which, to say the least, interested him greatly. The day was young, the morning bright, with a stimulating breath which is only imparted by a sunny day in mid-winter.

They walked at a moderate pace, in the direc-

tion of the Orange Grove. At the furthest end of this popular promenade was Colgrave's coffee-house, a favourite of Katherine Lowther's, because of its beautiful situation, and the select company which accorded the proprietor patronage. The house was one of the oldest in Bath, and had been built before the day when Ralph Allen had brought the Bath Stone into universal favour. The walls were of composite character, interspersed with heavy oak beams. The roof was ornamented with gables at each corner. The interior had been transformed to suit its present requirements, two rooms on the ground floor having been thrown into one, to make a long spacious apartment.

As they approached Colgrave's, they perceived Miss Lowther and her cousin standing in conversation with Lord John Lennox, and Mr. Fiennes, on the steps of the coffee-house.

Here were four people engaged in the most ordinary conversation, the light badinage of society, with some comments on the brilliance of the morning, after the snow of the previous day. Yet beneath it Dion knew well, and Wolfe's quickened faculties perceived, lay a shadow of disappointed hopes, the tragedy of life which evokes little pity, and is hardly considered as a tangible factor, but which, nevertheless, means

to some people a heartache, a lifelong disappointment, as great as any that Fortune can bring to bear on human destiny.

The deeper the nature the more lasting the wound.

Lord John Lennox was standing slightly aloof, at the moment when Dion and Wolfe approached, while Miss Angela Lovesay and Mr. Fiennes were sharpening their wits on one another, a pastime to which both were addicted.

Miss Lowther had her back to the two who had just come up, but Lord John's face was half turned in their direction. In his eyes was a look similar to the one they had seen there the night before, as he had led Katherine up the ball-room, the look a man gives to only one woman. He may admire many. He may accord certain strands of love to several, but, nevertheless, the fact remains that in the centre of his being only one image finds the mirror of his heart, and is there reflected. Now and again the man's eyes betray the truth, but as a rule he learns to veil the tell-tale glance.

Lord John was in this condition with regard to Katherine Lowther, and as yet had not fully mastered the accomplishment of concealing what he felt. It must be owned that this revelation, thus repeated, enhanced the impression Kathe-

rine had instantaneously made on James Wolfe.

If it be true that one of the most poignant bitternesses is to see happiness through another's eyes, it is also true that one of the most stimulating things is to have one's ambition fired, to attain that which is unattainable to somebody else.

Wolfe was a born leader, whether in war or peace, a man whose instinct drove him into the front rank. It is a fine characteristic, unless it merges into absolute selfishness. To achieve what is denied to others adds a glamour to success.

Hearing footsteps at the back of her, Katherine turned, her eyes rested on Lord Dion with a curious wistfulness. Then she looked at Colonel Wolfe. Her glance seemed to question his whole bearing. She apparently asked herself what it was in this thin, but soldierly figure, this plain, yet uncommon face, which evoked the admiration of the man, whose judgment she valued above all others. She asked herself what were the qualities which go to make a man's hero? What was it that Lord Dion saw in his friend? What was it which moved a veteran, like Admiral Hawke, to speak of him as the foremost young officer of the day? Above all, what was the out-

standing virtue which attracted the attention, and created confidence in the finest judge of men, William Pitt himself?

There is nothing which stimulates a woman more than a voyage of discovery, a belief that there is something which requires her intelligence to understand, her wit to find out. She flatters herself she can read character. The greater the mystery, the greater the depth to be plumbed, the more she is attracted.

CHAPTER IX

COLGRAVE'S COFFEE-HOUSE

IN the Eastern story the hero had only to step on to a magic-carpet, to be whisked across the world until he was placed in the desired environment.

Without volition on his part, Wolfe felt he had experienced some such aerial voyage, only in his case it was mental rather than physical. His mind had been occupied by the movements of fleets and armies, the drilling of recruits, the projects of a great Minister. In a brief space of time a fresh outlook had been evolved. He had been plunged into the vortex of the social life of Bath, and in the centre of it he had found a woman. The moving impulse of all time, the story as old as human nature, the factor in life which he had put on one side, ignored, forgotten, was suddenly brought face to face with him, and he found himself stirred against his will, diverted mentally from the single course he had followed for years, reduced to a condition which was half anger at being susceptible to the common in-

fluences which weighed with and controlled weaker men.

Wolfe was introduced to Lord John and Mr. Fiennes while he was in a day-dream, acknowledging their salutations with a courtesy which was born of habit. What they said to him, or he to them, he could not have told. The words were like the snowflakes of yesterday dissolved in an instant. •

As they mounted the steps together in a group and went into the coffee-house, the first real sentence to arrive at his brain and find its way to his memory was spoken by Katherine Lowther. She was addressing Mr. Fiennes :

“Colonel Wolfe is new to Bath. Mr. Nash gave us instructions to make his stay pleasant and profitable. Lord Dion, whose will is law, has entrusted us with the duty—which is also a pleasure”—she smiled at James Wolfe, who was just behind her—“of introducing him to the beauties of the neighbourhood.”

“He has begun with the first, and best,” Mr. Fiennes murmured.

Miss Lowther shook her head reprovingly at him. “You are not allowed to pay compliments, Mr. Fiennes, as you well know.”

“Is it contrary to the laws of the Master of Ceremonies? ”

"No; those of a much more strict person."

"Yourself?"

She laughed. "Of course."

"It is very kind of you to take so much trouble on my behalf, Miss Lowther." Wolfe spoke in half-halting sentences. A species of *mauvaise honte*, to which he was quite unaccustomed, had taken possession of him.

"Not at all. We are like the Athenians, ever seeking the new thing, and here seldom succeed in finding it. Seriously"—she went on in a different tone—"I am very fond and proud of Bath, not merely the city, but the surrounding country. I hear you are as good a horseman as you are dancer, Colonel Wolfe, and my cousin and I, with Lord Dion as our cavalier, will be delighted to pilot you through the district."

"I have a horse just suited to your height and weight," Lord Dion put in. "I should be sorry to ride it myself, but I have a groom who says he never wants a better animal under him. So it will suit you well."

"I see it is all arranged for me," Wolfe commented, with one of his smiles, which went a long way towards transforming rather a harsh face into a kindly one.

By this time the whole party had entered the long front room of the coffee-house, which occupied the whole length of the façade, looking out upon the termination of the Orange Grove. Tables were arranged at intervals on both sides, covered with the daintiest of white linen cloths, short enough to display the handsomely carved legs, supporting the mahogany tops.

The room was full of ladies and gentlemen partaking of breakfast, one table alone, near the window at the further end, being unoccupied. It was reserved for Miss Lowther and her friends.

Bows were exchanged as they passed up the room. Wolfe recognised several faces of those he had met on the previous evening. He noted the universal homage which was paid to Katherine Lowther, a homage of which the girl herself seemed quite unconscious, and it was spontaneous and involuntary from those who gave it. He partly understood then, he knew to the full later on, that it was not her station, her wealth, or her beauty, or the combination of all three, which conquered the regard and respect of all who knew her, but it was a quality of goodness, which transfused her other attributes, and stamped them with the guinea mark.

The breakfast was of the simplest : hot rolls, Sally Lunn's (a cake indigenous to Bath, afterwards popular throughout England), tea, coffee, chocolate.

Lord Dion sat at the end of the table, Miss Lowther on his right, with Colonel Wolfe next. Lord John faced her, Miss Lovesay at the foot of the board, Mr. Fiennes next.

During the early part of breakfast silence reigned. James Wolfe had every opportunity of observing his beautiful neighbour. He had seen her in the gorgeous attire of the ball-room. He saw her now in morning dress, which was costly only from the fact that its cut was beyond reproach. To the man it seemed a simple affair enough, nearly to the verge of plainness.

The morning is a test of beauty. In the evening artificial light assists those gentle deceptions, which are practised when nature demands the aid of art ; but the glare of sunlight, the breath of the morning air, do not lend themselves to concealment.

Katherine had nothing to conceal. She was as fresh, as bright, as glowing as the morning itself, on that peerless day.

Chatter from other tables near came to their ears, the discussion of an hundred-and-one small things, which made up the fashionable life of

Bath : the success of so-and-so, at faro ; the losses of another ; the impending arrivals ; the prospective departures ; the illness of some important lady, who had come in search of health, but failed to find it.

Wolfe listened, wondered how all this could be congenial to the girl by his side, in whose whole bearing, the depths of her eyes, the play of her sweet countenance, he recognised many things far deeper than the badinage of a frothy society, such as the place alone seemed to afford. With his usual blunt directness, he only awaited his opportunity, to ask Miss Lowther herself the question.

The motives which weighed with other people—Mr. Pitt, for instance—did not affect her. They came because of the medicinal waters, for the benefits accorded by baths and Pump-room. This was certainly not the case with Katherine Lowther. Some of the patients who flocked to Bath no doubt were hypochondriacal ; they imagined disorders which were non-existent, drank the waters to cure diseases which were born of imagination, not reality. To this class assuredly the girl by his side did not belong. Her broad white brow, her clear gaze, indicated the balanced mind, the *mens sana in corpore sano*.

Their party was the last to leave, having been the last to arrive. The long room had gradually cleared. Maidservants in prim caps were now clearing the tables, while Mrs. Colgrave, large of figure, and unbending of countenance, watched from the doorway, by the side of which was her high desk, which formed her receipt of custom.

Miss Lowther exchanged a remark or two with Mrs. Colgrave as they passed out. The old woman unbent to her as she did to no one else. Then her eyes travelled over the men who formed the escort. Colonel Wolfe was the only one with whose features she was not familiar, consequently she gave him an attention denied to the others.

Katherine read the dame's curiosity. "This is Colonel Wolfe," she told her. "You know both his father and mother. He comes to Bath in the intervals of fighting your friend Mr. Pitt's battles."

Mrs. Colgrave swept him a formal curtsy. "Mr. Pitt's friends are my friends," she said. "I am pleased to see you here, sir."

Outside Lord John Lennox and Mr. Fiennes took their leave. The former was a collector of emblazoned missals, and other old manuscripts. He had arranged to see one that morning, which

had been acquired by Mr. Dighton, the well-known bookseller in Gay Street. Mr. Fiennes was to accompany him.

After they had departed, Miss Lowther said, turning to Colonel Wolfe, "Now that you are refreshed, we will show you the view from the top of the Grove. It is a favourite one of mine, as much in the winter as in the spring and autumn. I am never in Bath in the summer. I think the place would be impossible during the very hot months."

Colonel Wolfe and Katherine strolled on together. Lord Dion and Miss Lovesay turned in the direction of the Abbey.

No words were exchanged until they reached the spot at which the girl was aiming. Then she turned and looked back over the city. The fine trees stood like skeletons against the sky, with here and there a white rim, emphasising the delicate tracery of the branches.

"From here we get one of the nicest views of the Abbey. I want one day to ask an artist to make a picture of it for me, at this point."

Wolfe stood for two or three minutes taking in the view.

Then he said, "I quite understand how you feel about it."

"I love it." The words came involuntarily.

They were said so low that they only just reached Wolfe's ears.

He smiled. "You have answered a question without knowing it. It was one I asked myself a few minutes ago, when we were in the coffee-house."

She looked into his eyes, with a frank smile, which answered to his own, showing her pearly teeth. "You wondered," she said, "what brought me to Bath?"

"That is right. I felt you could not have much in common with the people at the breakfast tables."

"I like some of them," she said; "but, it is true, with the majority I have not much affinity. Of course, I do not drink the waters, nor do I care to talk scandal, two of the principal occupations of the habituées of Bath; but there are things to me more important. I go to the Abbey every day, Sundays and week-days. You will find it replete with worshippers between the dinner hour and the time people get ready for evening entertainments, dances, concerts, or, as regards a large number, cards. Then, again, the neighbourhood round is very beautiful, undulating hills, broad streams, varied landscapes. I come from a beautiful country, but the surroundings

of Bath are equal to those of my native shire—Cumberland. The story of the place appeals to me. I like to think of the thousands of people who have been here”—she was speaking now in a different tone—“and who have found benefit, mitigating their physical troubles, from the days of Prince Bladud, down to the present time.”

“Then you believe the old legend?”

“I believe it because I see it enacted every day. The individual may change, but the beneficent influence of the waters goes on. Prince Bladud may or may not have rediscovered the virtues which the waters confer, but I believe there has never been a time, since Britain was inhabited, without the ills of man having been brought here to get the benefit of the waters.”

From where they were standing they could see steam rising from the King's Bath, owing to the absence of leaves from the trees.

Katherine, looking at it, remarked, “That is a secret which nature did not intend to keep to herself. The boiling waters proclaim their powers, so that the eyes of the most ignorant peasant can read their message.”

“I like to hear all this,” Colonel Wolfe responded. “Your words have taught me a

lesson. I saw only the surface, while you have indicated those deeper truths which lie beneath."

Katherine hesitated a moment before she went on. Why did her companion's opinion mean so much to her? As a rule, she lived her life independently, without troubling herself much about the comments and impressions of others.

At length she said, "You must think a woman's life, at any rate one of our class, a useless and frivolous one. You have the world before you, wide as the poles, to do and to die in. We have only a narrow space, which we pace with restricted steps, like some prisoner with high walls environing him on every side. Yet there are things we can do, and when we are able to do them, some consolation is accorded to us. We begin to think we are of some use in this work-a-day world. Do you know, Colonel Wolfe, there is a building in Bath which we owe to Mr. Nash? For this I thank him, in spirit, if not verbally, every time I see him."

"I thought that was true of most of the buildings in Bath? "

"I was not thinking of them, but of one, which I dare say you may never have heard of—

the hospital. Practically, he built it; and when I visit there, as I do most days, when I see the good it does, and the blessings it brings to poor souls and bodies, unable to help themselves, I feel in those walls we have the crown of the King of Bath."

She said no more, but led the way back to the trysting place, where they were to meet Miss Lovesay and Lord Dion.

Wolfe had been surprised at the trend of the conversation, and the information which his companion had almost unintentionally imparted. It afforded him a new view of her character. He had suspected depths, not revealed to the casual person. Now he was sure that here indeed was a woman, whom it was a privilege to know.

After meeting Miss Lovesay and Lord Dion, the party broke up, with an understanding that they should meet again in the Concert Room at six o'clock.

Lord Dion took the opportunity of a minute alone with Katherine to whisper: "There are big movements on the *tapis*, in which my friend will be called to play no small part—almost immediately."

"You have heard from Mr. Pitt?"

"Yes, by special messenger, this morning."

“Does Colonel Wolfe know? ”

“Not yet. My communication was confidential; but I know it is safe in your hands.”

Katherine nodded.

She watched Colonel Wolfe and Lord Dion as they walked away, raising their hats.

CHAPTER X

“THE DON”

THE livery stables, near the South Bridge, were in connection with the Crown Inn. Sir James Lowther stalled his horses there, when he was in Bath, and during his sister's residence kept two quiet hacks for her use and that of her cousin, Miss Lovesay.

Lord Dion had stables of his own, his house being away from the busiest thoroughfares of Bath.

The two ladies were standing with Lord Dion shortly after noon, on the day after the meeting at the coffee-house, all of them dressed for riding.

Colonel Wolfe had not yet appeared.

Two grooms in the service of Lord Dion—Brooke and Carrick—rode up, saluting. Carrick was riding his master's cob, while Brooke was mounted on a big, raking chestnut, with four white stockings.

They dismounted, and in obedience to a nod

from Lord Dion, walked the horses up and down. A slight fall of snow had occurred in the early morning, but at this moment the sun was shining, and the keen north wind, which had brought the snow, had lost its edge.

“Is your friend going to ride ‘The Don’?” Katherine inquired, in a tone evincing surprise.

“Yes, the mount will suit him well. He is a heavier man than he appears, owing to his height.”

“I was not thinking of that. But ‘The Don’ is a very difficult animal to manage, is it not?”

“Your brother has ridden him.”

“Oh! James. He hardly counts. He breaks in his own horses, as you know, and, I believe, the more difficult they are to ride, the better he likes it. Fortunately, he is not of the same opinion as regards Angela and myself. He takes care to choose dependable mounts for us.”

“I do not think you will find Colonel Wolfe has any trouble in managing ‘The Don.’ If I had thought so, I should not have ordered him to be brought. I have seen my friend ride, again and again, every kind of horse, upon roads in Scotland, which required most vigilant watchfulness and perfect mastery over the steed, down steep descents, with a precipice on one side, and an incline ending in a morass on the other. He

has that gift over horses which he displays in the management of men. He takes them in the rough, and turns them into a perfect machine, in an incredibly short space of time. I have heard from others, and seen myself, that his gift in this respect is almost unique in the British Army."

Katherine turned towards Lord Dion. Hitherto she had been watching the two horses, paying special attention to "The Don," who was fidgeting and had half-backed across the road, in spite of the fact that Brooke exercised him daily and was regarded as his especial groom. Now she rested her eyes on Lord Dion's face, reading into the fine soul within, giving him once more a mead of admiration, as the character of the man unconsciously betrayed itself. "How much you think of him!" was what she said aloud. What she thought was, "Is there any one like you in this world, so perfectly loyal, so absolutely unselfish?"

He smiled. "Yes, I own to it. I am proud to be his friend, and I think one day you will agree with me when you, too, know him well."

"Probably," she replied. "I am content to go a certain distance already."

"That is just what I hoped. You are the two people I think most of in the world."

Katherine swept him a curtsy, with a little gleam of malice in her eyes. "It is pleasant to be thought well of," she said, "even when it is only a man's reading of a woman, which is proverbially mistaken. To be coupled with Colonel Wolfe, in your estimation, is indeed an honour."

Angela Lovesay, standing by, at a short distance apart, had caught the sense of the observations, if not the actual words. She uttered a little "pish!" and stamped her foot on the ground. "How stupid men are!" she said, *sotto voce*. "Why did Providence endow them with brains, and deprive them of the sense to make use of them?"

Lord Dion wondered why Katherine's mood was ironical, for what he had said came from the truthfulness of his nature, and was neither a form of speech nor a compliment.

At this moment the door of General Wolfe's house opened, and Colonel Wolfe appeared, drawing on his riding-gloves. He had a light switch under his arm. Although in full military kit, he was without his sword, in deference to the rule which Mr. Nash enforced throughout his small kingdom. Behind the Colonel was his father, habited for walking.

They bowed to the ladies and Lord Dion, afterwards shaking hands.

"I hope I have not kept you all waiting," James Wolfe said.

"No, we were ready before our time," Katherine said. "Our horses have not come yet."

There was the ring of hoofs on the hard road. A groom on horseback came round the corner of the Square, sitting on a lady's saddle, with another mare at the lead.

"Here they are!" Katherine cried.

Colonel Wolfe looked his admiration; for the girl, appearing in a new aspect in the tightly-fitting habit, extorted his approval once more.

"I hope you will all have a pleasant ride," General Wolfe said. "I thought early this morning snow would have stopped you, but I believe now it will hold off for the rest of the afternoon."

James Wolfe loved a horse. If he had had his way, he would have been a cavalry leader on the battle-fields of Europe, heading the charge, inspiring the force behind him to emulate his example of courage. But this had been denied him, and he was the last man to repine, pro-

vided the State gave him occupation and plenty of it.

He walked down the road towards "The Don," understanding at once it was the horse intended for him.

General Wolfe helped Miss Lovesay to mount, while Lord Dion performed the same office for Katherine Lowther. It was a strain upon his weak physique, but it was an attention which he would have been loth to give up to another.

Katherine knew this fact, and also the meaning of the touch which he conveyed, as he placed the reins in her hand.

Their eyes met. It appeared as if something too deep for words, something which neither of them fully understood, or had the power to express, passed between them.

Sometimes it seemed to Katherine as if she must believe the old idea of Pythagoras—the transmigration of souls—that in some former existence Lord Dion had been a noble hound, perchance, which had given its life for its master.

Many of the visitors and residents of Bath were promenading the streets at this time, taking advantage of the brilliant sunshine. The men had gold-headed canes under their arms, snuff-boxes

and handkerchiefs in their hands. The ladies were enveloped in furs. Not a few were moving about in the road flanking Queen's Square. The men especially watched with interest all that was going on. Miss Lowther had a host of admirers, to whom she bowed, as with a fine touch on her well-groomed mare, she started in the direction Colonel Wolfe had already taken, on his way to mount "The Don."

This horse shared with Miss Lowther the interest of the people. "The Don" was an object of admiration, but of another kind. It was also well known that few men cared to ride the horse, with the exception of its owner, Sir James Lowther, and the groom Brooke.

Wolfe's personality, his exploits in the past, the reputation he had won, the expectation of the future, which pointed him out as likely to achieve a very high place, helped to focus the curiosity of the onlookers.

Colonel Wolfe himself was unconscious both of the interest he had excited and the question about "The Don": "Would Colonel Wolfe be able to master it?"

There was one person without a doubt on the subject—Lord Dion.

The Colonel passed Dion's horse with a pat, and went forward to his own steed. Brooke

looked at him with great curiosity. He, too, wondered if this rider would succeed where so many had failed.

“‘The Don’—that is the horse’s name, sir”—stroking the mane of the animal—“is a bit awkward to mount. He spreads himself across the road as soon as he knows what you are about to do. He takes me more quietly than most, but I like to get him against a wall, so that he has to stand straight. He wants watching, too, while you ride him. He has run away with me once or twice, and if he gets the bit between his teeth, there is no stopping him.”

“Thank you. I know the kind of horse.” He handed the groom a *douceur*. Then he turned all his attention to the chestnut, first looking at him and admiring his points, then caressing him with the hand, from which he had withdrawn his gauntlet.

“The Don” snorted, breathed heavily, a white steam proceeding from his nostrils into the frosty air. Wolfe took no notice, but went on with the occupation of making acquaintance, passing his hand over the horse’s head, talking to him, establishing a kind of freemasonry with him.

Brooke looked surprised. “I never saw him

let anybody touch his ears before, except Sir James, sir, and he is an exception to every rule."

Wolfe was amused. "There are some secrets about the management of a horse. I am not sure whether the same thing does not apply to men as well. You must love them, and not be afraid of them. Of course, horses are most nervous animals, but if they learn to trust their riders, their nerves become quieted."

Then he passed round to the other side, as he did so taking the bridle from the hands of the groom. "That will do, my man. Stand back a little."

"You will never be able to mount by yourself, sir, in the middle of the road. The thing is almost impossible with a horse like 'The Don.'"

Wolfe did not reply. He was still patting the animal.

Suddenly he was on "The Don's" back. He had mounted from the wrong side.

Brooke could hardly believe his eyes. The chestnut seemed no less astonished, and for a moment was inclined to rear, but a word or two reduced him to order.

"Lengthen the stirrups, please."

Brooke came forward and did as he was bid.

"Well, sir," he said, "I never saw that done before."

"It is one of the first things one learns in cavalry barracks," Wolfe said. "A horse, which has the trick of resisting being mounted, will often submit quietly if taken on the other side."

Lord Dion rode to Wolfe's side. "I see you have made friends with 'The Don' already."

"Yes; we shall understand one another even better in a little while. Let us try a canter before the ladies come up." So saying, he encouraged his horse, but "The Don" began to sidle, tossing his head and snorting.

Wolfe almost lifted him with the curb, while he touched his flank slightly with the spur. The chestnut bounded forward, trying to get hold of the bit, but the hand on the bridle was like iron. "The Don" galloped as far as the end of the street, and tried to get round the corner, but Wolfe turned him with a quick movement. The horse almost fell with his rider, but Wolfe, well aware of the risk on a frosty road, was on the look-out and used his full strength to keep the beast up. He managed to get him round without mishap, patted him again, after checking him for a moment, then cantered

quietly back to Lord Dion, who had been following at a slower pace.

"Now I think we can join the ladies, without any risk to them."

The grooms were already exchanging complimentary remarks on the Colonel's riding. They had never seen anything like it. Five minutes had established an obvious relationship between rider and horse.

On a few occasions, during the expedition which followed, "The Don" attempted to get rid of his master, but on their return journey no animal could have been pleasanter to ride, and from that time forwards, during Wolfe's stay in Bath, there was no further difficulty.

Miss Lowther rode by the Colonel's side on the outward journey, but coming back she was escorted by Lord Dion, Wolfe acting as cavalier to Miss Lovesay. They returned by way of Claverton Downs, with its wild, wide landscape sprinkled with snow. Below them as they crossed the bridge, was the city with its white walls and the swift flowing Avon winding in and out, a fine bridge spanning the stream.

"I think you want to see your friend on horse-back to understand him." Katherine was the speaker. Colonel Wolfe was riding a dozen

paces in front, and was engaged in overcoming "The Don's" hesitation about setting foot on the bridge.

"I know what you mean. You realise the master of men when you see him on horse-back."

CHAPTER XI

“THE GEORGE” AT TAUNTON

“THIS is hardly campaigning,” Wolfe said, with a sardonic smile.

“No, only an interlude,” Lord Dion answered.

“A very pleasant one, thanks to you, my friend.”

The two were sitting in the oak-beamed, sanded parlour of “The George” at Taunton. They had come so far on the road to Exeter in Lord Dion’s coach, drawn by six horses, two menservants armed with horse-pistols on the dicky at the back. Lord Dion’s own man was on the box, by the side of the coachman, who was likewise armed.

Each gentleman had a pair of pistols as well as his sword. The roads were notoriously infested with foot-pads, and a few mounted tobyas as well. These precautions had been justified, for on the road near Wells, where it dipped into a gloomy ravine, a shout from both sides had directed the coachman to pull up.

Almost before he could do so, Wolfe, in a rage, had jumped out of the coach and fired his pistol straight at a mounted man, whose figure could be dimly seen in silhouette a few paces towards the bottom of the valley.

Wolfe had shouted in stentorian tones as he fired: "You dare to stop an officer of His Majesty on the King's highway."

The horses plunged, and were with difficulty restrained by the driver from overturning the coach.

The unexpected answer to their challenge, and the vigour of the counter-attack, frightened the assailants. They galloped off with a ring of hoofs down the road, on which frost lay, although it had disappeared on the more exposed ground, where the rays of the sun had reached it.

It had been useless to pursue them, but when they had driven another mile and reached rising ground, with fir-trees on either side, the coachman had pulled up of his own accord. A post-chaise lay on its side, with the pole broken and the traces cut—as they discovered on closer inspection.

A lady and gentleman, with two servants, came forward with a tale of having been maltreated and robbed, and their horses stolen, no

doubt by the gang who had found a very different quarry, when they attempted the same game upon Lord Dion’s coach.

The travellers and their servants were taken up and left at Wells. Nothing further occurred, and, at Taunton, Wolfe and Dion dined, and put up for the night.

The fortnight at Bath had passed all too quickly, a fortnight of continual meetings between the various members of the friendly party already described. Mr. Nash’s instructions, as to according a welcome to Colonel Wolfe, and making his stay a pleasant one, had been carried out to the letter. Months of casual acquaintance could hardly have brought about a more complete understanding, a more pleasant intimacy than did these two crowded weeks.

At the close of Wolfe’s visit, Lord Dion himself had suggested that he should go with him, when he returned to his quarters at Exeter, never having seen that city with its fine Cathedral.

Now they were well on their way. By noon on the morrow they expected to reach their destination. Then would come the routine of a soldier’s life, and, perhaps, almost immediately, fresh instructions for Colonel Wolfe. This Lord Dion regarded as inevitable, in accordance with

the private information he had had from William Pitt.

Dinner was over, a steaming bowl of punch, flanked by glasses, had been placed on the table, in front of the wide fireplace. They were the only guests in the inn that night, others having dined and left before their arrival.

Lord Dion, who was acting as host, filled his friend's glass and his own. He raised his tumbler to his lips, and bowing over it, said, "Success! The honour of your country, and your own."

"Thank you. What shall I wish you in return, Dion? What can you have in the future, more than in the present, and in the past? "

" Ah! what? "

Blair put his glass down, after sipping from it. Then he leant back in the big, wooden arm-chair, his eyes half closed, his feet stretched towards the fire.

Wolfe looked at him, speculating in what direction his thoughts had gone. There was a sadness indicated in the lines of the fine face, a drawn look about the lips, crow's-feet about the eyes.

Had Wolfe's half-careless words stirred some

vein of thought, touched a chord which vibrated in the soul of this man, endowed with so many gifts beyond his fellows, yet carrying always the burden which Providence had literally placed on his shoulders?

James Wolfe was not naturally a reader of another's secret feelings. He had the gift of recognising in a man his capacity for performing certain tasks; he knew instinctively whom he could trust, especially in the profession he had studied with the utmost ardour from his youth up; but when it came to analysing, to plumb-ing the depths of such a nature as that of his friend Dion Blair, he knew himself to be at sea.

A long pause ensued before any words were said; in fact, Colonel Wolfe had almost forgotten what his last remark had been. He was vividly living over again certain scenes, through which he had passed during his visit to Bath. In the centre of the picture, dominating all his thoughts, was the gracious figure of Katherine Lowther. He recalled her as they danced together the evolutions of the minuet at more than one of the Assembly balls; he saw her handling the bow of her violin, displaying her shapely arm, which would have evoked the admiration of any sculptor; he saw the whiteness of her throat, the

glory of her hair; he looked into the depths of her blue eyes, and found them ever changing, yet ever the same; he pictured her graceful form as she rode by his side through the valleys and uplands of the Somersetshire country, or across the Avon into Gloucestershire. Above all, he realised that in her was embodied all he admired most in the nature of womanhood, tenderness, sympathy, and intellectual clarity, a character without fear, without reproach. He was startled when Dion broke the silence, and recalled him to the prosaic environment of "The George" parlour.

"No! I do not know what you can wish for me beyond what I have already—the friendship of those whom I love and value most. May I grow old—if old age is permitted to me—in the sunshine of their favour, and may I be able in some small measure to radiate it into the lives of others."

He stretched forward, and laid his hand, fine, thin, aristocratic, delicate, accentuated by the ruffle at his wrist, on Wolfe's knee. "You most of all," he went on, and under his breath he added—the words did not reach Wolfe—"with perhaps one exception."

An hour went by quickly, as they sat with their feet on the stone surround of the hearth.

Wolfe had gone back to his visions, which had nearly merged into real dreams, by the time the landlord came to see if they had all they required.

Lord Dion, resting his elbows on the arm of his chair, was supporting his face with his hands, the tips of his fingers bringing out the hollows formed at the termination of his forehead. He was wondering, with a feverish inquietude, if anything definite had passed between his friend and Katherine Lowther.

During the afternoon which preceded their departure from Bath, a fairly numerous company had ridden out to partake of tea, or other light refreshment, at an old hostelry, in the village of Keynsham. The party had included Lord John Thynne, Mr. Fiennes, General Wolfe and his son, Miss Lovesay, Mr. Cecil Howard, Miss Lowther, and Lord Dion himself.

On their way home, whether by chance or by arrangement, Colonel Wolfe and Katherine, riding at the rear of the party, became separated from them, only rejoining them at the outskirts of the city. It was an opportunity for any confidential communication, but whether such had taken place Dion had no means of knowing. Katherine had too great a command over herself to show excitement, even if she felt any, and

James Wolfe had learnt self-discipline in the hard school of life.

After the landlord had departed, Wolfe rose and stretched himself. "I believe I went to sleep," he said. "I saw visions and dreamt dreams, and I hardly know if they were real or imaginary!"

Dion Blair leant forward, his eyes striving to read his friend's face, on which the light from a hanging lamp shone fitfully.

"I hope they were pleasant ones, James?"

Wolfe laughed. "Almost too much so," he said. "The last fortnight must itself be regarded as a dream, to be dispelled by the hard reality of service in the field. I must not let my mind linger upon it, when in the trenches, watching during the long nights for the first onset of the enemy."

"I think even the strongest of us cannot altogether drive away memories. Even with your will-power you will not be able to help thinking of us, in Bath, at times. As for those whom you leave behind, with little to occupy them, I can answer that their thoughts will go out to you continually."

"Of whom are you speaking?" He had come close to Dion, and was looking straight at him.

"Well, of myself, for one!"

"Yes?"

"Your father and mother."

"The best in the world. No one knows all I owe to them."

Lord Dion nodded his head. A shadow passed across his face. In this respect, again, Wolfe had so much, and he nothing.

After a pause James said, "Any one else?"

"I should think so, but you must know better than I."

"I know nothing."

"Then you lost your opportunity."

"What opportunity?"

"As you rode back together yesterday."

"The sun was hastening to its setting overhead, I think I saw one or two pale stars appearing as we crossed the bridge."

"What has that to do with it?" Dion inquired, almost impatiently.

The luminaries in the sky were far away out of reach."

"I do not follow the analogy."

"Do you happen to know, friend Dion, that I am a poor soldier of fortune, almost out at elbows, not always able to keep my head above water, but owing to the best of fathers not exactly in debt. I have only my sword wherewith to carve my way to possible fortune and

a large black seal, with a coat-of-arms stamped upon it.

Wolfe glanced significantly at his friend. The arms were those of William Pitt.

It was the 6th of January, 1758.

CHAPTER XII

A SUMMONS

WOLFE balanced the letter in his hand for a minute or so, before he broke the seal. The appearance of the messenger, with all the signs of hasty travel upon him, as well as the coat-of-arms, indicated the importance of the communication.

It was a crisis in his life, and he knew it. It was a call to arms, the very breath of his life, the thing he loved best. Unconsciously, his eyes expressed what was at the back of his mind.

Dion Blair, who had a marvellous gift of insight, and who knew his friend as well as any one man could possibly know another, read the joy of battle in his eyes.

Why, at that moment did the sanded parlour of "The George" at Taunton present itself vividly as a background to his recollection? Why did a sentence of his own come to him, as if he heard another say it, as if it were the unquestioned summing up of an impartial judge, "You do not know what love is"?

To the man of strong character and determined purpose, one thing must reign to the exclusion of everything else. He may turn on one side in his moments of leisure to the excitement of cards, the stimulus of gaming, of racing, even the whirl of society, the dalliance of fair women; but biding its time, awaiting its opportunity, is the central bias, the man's real self, the goal which absorbs the desires and thoughts of his mind and soul.

Lord Dion was learning a lesson which had somehow escaped him hitherto, which disturbed his calculations, rendering them almost void. The fact was, so few men of his acquaintance had anything of the strenuous purpose, which attracted him to Wolfe, without his being aware of the exact cause of that attraction.

Obsession! It was written in the whole demeanour of his friend, in the firm set of his chin, in the fire of his eyes, as he broke the seal of the missive, and read the contents.

Even the beauty, the perfection of Katherine Lowther could not weigh in the balance, for a single instant, against the call of the blood, that fire of military zeal, which had brought James Wolfe to the forefront of the soldiers of his time, almost at a bound, which was to write his name, in letters of blood and fire on the annals of his nation and of the world.

After having read the communication, Wolfe handed the letter to Dion Blair, by an instinctive act, his brain busy with his plans.

It ran as follows :

“ DEAR SIR,

“ I shall be obliged by your calling upon me here at the earliest possible moment on a matter of urgency. Your military duties at Exeter must be handed over to the next in command.

“ I am, sir, your obedient, humble servant,

“ WILLIAM PITT.

“ *St. James' Square,*

“ *Jan. 2nd, 1758.*”

Lord Dion had been prepared for this expressive epistle, by the letter he had himself received, more than a fortnight earlier. Evidently the great Minister had now made his plans sufficiently to arrange details with the officers, who were to carry them out.

Colonel Wolfe turned to the courier. “ I see this letter is dated the 2nd.”

“ Yes, sir. I started immediately.”

“ What is the distance to London? ”

“ A trifle over one hundred and seventy miles, sir.”

Wolfe nodded. The messenger had taken

four days to do the journey. He would see if it could not be accomplished in half the time. But the determination was not expressed in so many words.

"I shall start this evening. There will be no necessity for you to accompany me. Sergeant Clintock will find you quarters for the night. Have you made any arrangements for my journey?"

"Yes, sir. I was instructed to do so. There will be relays of horses provided throughout the journey." He mentioned the places, the last being Weybridge. This was the shortest division, as a rule about thirty miles being allowed for each horse.

"Are the roads good?"

"As well as can be expected at this time of the year, sir."

Wolfe handed the man a guinea, then he touched a handbell on his table. His military servant, Richard Semple, came in answer to the summons.

"Take this man to Sergeant Clintock, and tell him to find him accommodation. Then ask Major Straughan to come to me. I shall be starting for London before sundown. You will accompany me. Pack our valises. Have the horses ready at a quarter to five."

Semple saluted, and motioned to the courier, as he opened the door, to follow him out.

"A man of few words!" Lord Dion commented.

"Yes, it is one of his virtues. He is slow to speak and quick to act, a first-rate soldier and an excellent servant."

"Like yourself." Dion smiled.

"That is the highest compliment you can pay me."

"Is a truth ever a compliment?"

Wolfe did not reply, his mind was too busy to discuss abstract propositions.

Suddenly his duties as host flashed across him. Dion had come with him to Exeter, and he was arranging to leave him immediately afterwards, without a word of apology.

"I beg your pardon, Dion," he said.

"On what account?"

"Leaving you straight away. I have never had the grace even to say I am sorry."

"I should be distressed if you told me an untruth," Blair replied. "Besides," he added, after a second, "I came with my eyes open, for I expected you would have a summons sooner or later from Mr. Pitt. He wrote me to that effect some little time ago, but the message was confidential."

"I am glad to hear that. It makes my conduct less blameworthy. You know I am pleased. It means more to me than anything."

Lord Dion walked to the uncurtained window and looked out. On one side he could see, at some distance, the river gleaming in the sunlight. Turning in the opposite direction, he could just catch a glimpse of one of the cathedral towers.

Wolfe did not notice that his last remark had been accepted by his friend without further comment. To himself it was so true that it appeared obvious enough. To Lord Dion it meant something quite different. No two men, however deep the friendship between them, ever can see the same thing with exactly similar eyes—especially with a woman in the case.

Wolfe had taken a seat at the table, and was jotting down the heads of certain memoranda, arrangements and instructions for his second-in-command. He was providing for an absence, which, something told him, would be of considerable duration. Dion Blair came up to him. "I will leave you now," he said. "There must be so much for you to arrange before you start for London. I will come back to see you off."

Wolfe rose and grasped his friend's hand.

"You are most considerate," he said. "I feel myself horribly selfish."

"Not at all; it is the fortune of war."

"Will you remain in Exeter?"

"For a week or ten days, I think."

"Then I will write to you here, as soon as I have had my interview with Mr. Pitt."

"I shall be most anxious to hear the result, and will, of course, regard your communication as confidential."

Wolfe looked at him, and as he did so, just for a moment, the past fortnight in Bath came back to him. His thoughts of yesterday: how far they seemed away from the activities of the present! Yet, with all his obsession, the image of Katherine Lowther now obtruded itself upon him, and for a moment or two, at any rate, occupied the centre of the stage.

"I shall write to my father," he said. "I have never kept anything from him. He is, of course, as absolutely to be trusted with State secrets as he is with my own."

As he said this, the quick intelligence of his friend grasped the fact that he was leading up to something. He waited.

Then Wolfe went on, with assumed carelessness: "I know very little about women, but what little I know convinces me that Miss

Katherine Lowther is an exception to most rules."

"You mean," replied Blair quietly, "that I may regard her as included in any information received from you."

Wolfe nodded. "I should like her to know that Mr. Pitt trusts me. She thinks so much of his opinion."

"You may leave it in my hands."

A knock at the door. Major Straughan was ushered in. Lord Dion took the opportunity of escaping. There was an ache in his heart which he could hardly have diagnosed. The companionship of his friend was one of the things he valued most, to which he looked forward intensely when they were parted. Now he was glad to leave him, to breathe the keen air of the open road—to be alone.

Wolfe started punctually to the moment. Blair stood on the single step at the entrance of the barracks to see him off. The friends had exchanged the heartiest grip before the Colonel swung himself on to his horse, with that look on his face which so indicated his character—resolute determination, strength, the eagerness of a boy still remaining in the disciplined soul of the man.

"I will write, as I promised, directing to 'The Clarence.' "

"I shall be there, and most interested to have your news."

The night was fast closing in, as the horses' hoofs rang out on the metalled road.

Throughout the night Wolfe pounded on, his servant riding beside him. Only necessary remarks were exchanged, for the master was intent on his mission, and the man naturally silent.

The cold was intense when, by midnight, they reached the high lands of Salisbury Plain. At "The Lamb," hard by the shelter of the Cathedral spire, Wolfe drew rein. In the stables, awaiting them, were the horses for the next stage of the journey. The travellers entered the inn, finding the place cold and dark, but a sleepy servant was roused to furnish them with a hasty meal.

Master and man ate at the sideboard in company, neither of them sitting. Colonel Wolfe smiled grimly at Semple. Tough as he was, the man was already showing signs of fatigue. It seemed as if his master's comparatively delicate physique was so inspired by the spirit within that he was tuned up to any key, capable of enduring any stress.

At Farnborough Semple became dead-beat. A fresh horse was ready for him, but he was in-

capable of getting into the saddle. Wolfe left him at the inn, with an injunction to follow on the morrow.

The sun was nearly at its height when the intrepid horseman rode through the streets of London. Men and women looked at the haggard face, the form bending over the horse's neck, the bleared eyes, which the keen wind of the night had cut as if with a lash. They wondered, as well they might, where he had come from, and what was his errand.

Purpose, masterful, all-dominating purpose, was written on the face and figure of that horseman for all to see. The very mud, which had splattered his top-boots and the lower parts of his person, told a tale of the length of the ride, for the red mud of Devon was dusted over by the white chalk of Salisbury Plain.

At "The Bell," in Jermyn Street, Wolfe left his steed, and barely waiting to drink some spiced ale, which the host suggested, walked the few remaining yards in the direction of St. James's Square.

The house Mr. William Pitt occupied was the first on the right-hand side, after turning in from the adjoining street. It stands to-day, as it did then, solid, compact, with something distinctively English in its appearance.

As James Wolfe was about to knock at the door, it opened. Lord Howe was coming out—the beau ideal of a soldier, dressed with somewhat scrupulous regard for the fashionable world, in which he moved as one of the bright particular stars.

The contrast between these two men, the one travel-stained to the last degree, the other spick and span, was as marked as possible. Nevertheless, they were kindred souls, keen, resolute soldiers, with cool heads, and endowed with a courage which never failed.

Howe looked at Wolfe with intense surprise. “Where have you come from?” he queried.

“Exeter. Mr. Pitt summoned me.” He said the words with some difficulty. He had to moisten his lips with his tongue. His gait suggested intense weariness, and the cramp of long sitting on horseback.

“When did you leave?”

“About dusk yesterday afternoon.”

Lord Howe stared at him. “How far is it, man?”

“I believe, about a hundred and seventy miles.”

“I wonder you are alive!”

“It takes more than that to kill me!”

Without another word Howe linked his arm in that of Wolfe, apparently merely a friendly

action, really affording him support across the hall-place to Pitt's study.

A servant who was standing in the vestibule, seeing Lord Howe return, opened the door for them.

Pitt was engaged with some figures at a writing-table. There was another desk in the room for a secretary, but it was unoccupied. He did not look up, doubtless thinking it was one of the household.

"I found some one coming to see you, sir, and have brought him in."

The statesman turned quickly, uttering a slight exclamation, partly of surprise, on seeing Wolfe, partly caused by a twinge of pain in his foot, which was swathed in flannel and resting on a stool.

The excitement of the moment brought a hectic flush into Wolfe's pale cheeks. As this died away he looked ghastly.

Pitt half rose. "Give the Colonel a chair," he suggested to Howe. His eyes travelled over the mud-spattered figure. "You have ridden far and fast," he said. "When did you leave Exeter?"

"Last evening, sir." The words sounded far off, hollow, almost indistinct.

"Last evening! I should have thought that impossible. Did you come alone?"

“My manservant was with me part of the way. I left him at Farnborough.”

Pitt tapped his teeth with his quill pen; mentally he reviewed the situation. “You are a dangerous man to send for,” he said, “unless with explicit instructions as to the time you are to consume on the journey.” The words were simple enough, but the expression indicated the great man’s approval. Wolfe’s ardour had surpassed even his expectation. Here was a man of a kindred spirit. It was not long since Pitt himself had been called a “fiery, untamed cornet of horse.” He clapped his hands.

The man who had opened the door reappeared.

“Bring some wine,” Pitt ordered. A nod indicated he was to hurry.

“You two gentlemen are well met,” Pitt said, as soon as the door closed. “I have work for both of you, but, unfortunately, not together.”

“I am sorry for that, sir,” Lord Howe said. “I should have preferred Colonel Wolfe as a comrade to any man in the army.”

“And I Lord Howe,” Wolfe put in.

“I understand that. But the King’s service must come first. You, my lord,” turning to Howe, “know exactly what I want done, and I trust to you to act as right-hand man to General Abercromby. I will explain the position of

affairs to you to-morrow, Colonel Wolfe. My advice now is, have a good meal and go to bed. Where are you staying? ”

“I left my horse at ‘The Bell,’ in Jermyn Street, and told the landlord to keep me a room.”

“You will find the quarters comfortable there. Most of my friends use that house.”

The manservant brought in the wine. Lord Howe declined to take any, but Wolfe felt the need of the potation.

“Call here to-morrow about eleven o’clock, Colonel Wolfe,” Pitt directed. He held out his hand.

As he took it, Wolfe’s feeling was indescribable. To him Pitt represented the honour and glory of England, personified.

CHAPTER XIII

LORD DION RETURNS

LORD DION found the time hang heavily on his hands, as the days wore on, after Colonel Wolfe's departure.

Fortunately, the district was new to him. He drove or rode daily. The weather continued open. On two or three occasions he hunted with neighbouring packs of hounds. In spite of his frail physique, he was a good rider, provided the horse was suited to him—one that went easily, without pulling.

He explored the country eastwards and southwards, following the line of the coast. He admired the red cliffs, against which the sea flung itself, when the tide was high, and the wind blew from the north-east.

Westward he went as far as the grim borderland of Dartmoor, but the route did not appeal to him. The sight of barren hills ranged like giant sentinels against the sky; the wide acres of marsh-land, the sparsely-populated country,

unfertile, unproductive, which ran by the side of the moor—all these natural features created a sensation of despondency, of loneliness, which depressed the sensitive temperament of his finely organised nature. He turned from it with a kind of shudder. To him brightness and life were necessary, the tonic of congenial companionship.

The nights were long. A few visitors came to the hotel, mainly business men, on their way from the coast, to the inland districts of Somerset and Dorset. Lord Dion did not make acquaintance easily, and perhaps his obvious air of breeding and refinement kept these chance-comers at arm's length. He loved the Cathedral, and soon grew to know every nook and cranny, all the beauties of the most varied interior-architecture in England. But services were infrequent, not performed daily, according to the custom of the Abbey.

He had ample time to think of his friend. His heart went back to him wistfully, as well as to the circle he loved at Bath. He did not disguise from himself that in the centre of it all, dominating it, was Katherine Lowther.

He had achieved his purpose of bringing together the two beings he valued most. Now he had time to weigh the results, to look back upon it—and he doubted. Depression weighed heavily upon his spirits. He had tried to play the part

of Providence, and he realised that a man's vision is so limited, the complex conditions of life are so puzzling, that to do so was to attempt a dangerous rôle.

He had grown strangely restless, but he had promised to wait at Exeter till Wolfe's letter came. It arrived on the tenth day of his sojourn. Dion received it with intense satisfaction, not merely because he was anxious to hear what his friend had to say, but because the receipt of the packet would effect his own release. He was like a bow at full tension, a touch on the taut string would set the arrow free.

He read Wolfe's epistle in the private sitting-room he had taken at "The Clarence."

It was dated from Blackheath, Wolfe having taken up quarters in a house belonging to his father, after two nights spent at "The Bell" in Jermyn Street.

"MY DEAR DION,

"This is the first free moment I have had at my disposal, since reaching London, to sit down to write a letter to you. I managed to send my father a hurried scrawl yesterday to let my parents know where I am quartered, and to assure them I am well and hearty.

"I have only now recovered from the fatigues

of my journey, which I made in twenty hours, to the surprise—and, I think, satisfaction—of the Great Man. He received me most graciously, and soon afterwards sent me off to bed, where I remained for fifteen hours!

“On the following morning I called upon Mr. Pitt by his appointment. He explicitly indicated his plans, together with the part in them which he destined for myself.

“His conception is great, and by God’s grace we will carry it through. I had thought of the fringe of the American Continent. He aims at the domination of the whole, to redress our losses in Europe by successes on the other side of the Atlantic.

“To effect this, three separate expeditions are to be sent out. He has offered me the post of Brigadier in the most important and vital of the three. General Amherst has been recalled from Germany to take command, and the object of our attack is to be the city and fortress of Louisburg, the most strongly fortified position belonging to France, with the exception of Quebec, throughout the whole continent. It controls, as you know, the entrance of that magnificent river the St. Lawrence. Look out of your windows, over the Exe, and imagine a river four times the size and volume of that English stream, ice-bound

throughout the winter, bristling with forts, manned by gunners unsurpassed—perhaps unequalled—in the armies of the world. Here fleet and expeditionary force, consisting of some eleven thousand men of all arms, are to concentrate. Admiral Boscawen, one of the finest officers living, is to assist General Amherst in the blockade, and, it is hoped, the capture of Louisburg.

“If we fail, Mr. Pitt’s plans are destroyed. If we succeed, he will achieve a success such as has not fallen to English arms for many years.

“In that case Quebec lies beyond as the ultimate object of our aims—and, by God’s mercy, one day it will be captured. May I live to see the standard of England floating above its towers and escarpments!

“All preparations are being hurried on. The start will be made as soon as possible. Only the summer months are available for the kind of work which lies before us. Mr. Pitt is anxious that the present year should more than compensate for the disasters our arms suffered during the last. He wishes me to hold myself in readiness to consult with him at any moment. It is, therefore, highly improbable that I shall return to the regiment, still less can I hope to visit Bath.

“I look to you to make apologies and express

my regret in a certain quarter ! I will keep you informed as to my movements.

“Your friend for ever,

“JAMES WOLFE.”

Lord Dion put the letter away into a pocket-book, where he kept papers of a personal value. Then he gave orders to his confidential servant, to have the coach ready to start for Bath on the following morning.

On the return journey he put up once more at “The George” at Taunton, which they reached before nightfall. This time he dined alone, and as he sat before the fire after the meal, with a cobwebbed bottle of claret by his side, his mind naturally reverted to the last occasion when he had been in the room. If he closed his eyes he could picture Wolfe sitting opposite to him, his legs stretched out towards the fire. The whole purport of their conversation, even the words of some of the sentences, was fresh in his memory.

The letter from his friend lay in a pocket of his surtout, especially constructed. He could realise Wolfe’s activities during the busy time of his preparation, the riding to and from St. James’s Square, the ordering of such things as would be necessary for the time on shipboard and after arrival in America.

He had seen his friend under conditions of service during those arduous days in Scotland, when the country was in a ferment, a night attack expected at any moment, when the Highlands had to be patrolled with ceaseless activity. Wolfe, like all successful men, had the gift of concentration; he thought of the one matter in hand, and of that only, until it was accomplished.

Lord Dion felt certain that few of his thoughts would go westwards during these days, and that then most of them would be directed towards his parents, for in his case the family tie was wonderfully strong.

He rose and paced the room, restlessness was upon him. On the morrow, towards nightfall, he hoped to be once again in Bath. No schoolboy, away from home for the first time, could have looked forward more ardently towards the holidays, than did Dion Blair to the termination of his short absence from Bath.

He could hardly explain this to himself. Every year some months intervened between his visits, but never before had he experienced such a desire to return.

In that room, where he now was, Colonel Wolfe frankly expressed his opinion of the most important things in a man's life. He had shown

conclusively that his profession, his ambition, in the best sense, was the predominant note; that all else was subservient to it, including even the one thing which has successfully fought with and overcome ambition in the long story of the ages—love!

If not on the next day, at any rate on the one which followed upon it, Lord Dion would see Katherine Lowther in that friendly, intimate converse, which had characterised their association for a long period. He would convey Wolfe's message to her, and would be able to mark the result in her tell-tale features. She might disguise her thoughts to the world, but he felt sure his knowledge of her, his fine perception, would read anything which lay behind her appearance.

Had James Wolfe made a lasting impression on a heart, which he knew did not readily offer itself as a successful mark to the attacks of those, who were only too eager to enter the citadel? Had he succeeded, as at one time Dion had hoped he would, where others failed? If he had, would it be for the happiness of both? Above all, would it be for the happiness of Katherine herself?

In the commanding beauty of her presence, in the unique quality of her gifts, was she prepared

to occupy a second place in the regard of the man she loved?

Lord Dion passed several restless hours that night. The questions which had forced themselves upon him drove away sleep.

The queries remained unsolved.

CHAPTER XIV

A MORNING CALL

THE first news which reached Lord Dion, when he arrived in Bath, was that Katherine Lowther had sprained her ankle ; she had slipped getting out of a sedan chair, and had fallen rather heavily.

He wondered whether she would be willing to see him. The doubt made him the more anxious to achieve his purpose.

On the morning succeeding his return, soon after breakfast, he sent a manservant with a note to ask her the question. He had partaken of that meal at his own house, instead of at Colgrave's, as he had intended doing, before hearing of Katherine's accident.

“MY DEAR MISS LOWTHER,

“I am distressed to hear you are kept to the house with a sprained ankle. My house-keeper informed me of the fact as soon as I arrived home last night. I should much like to

pay my respects, and to express my sympathy in person. If you grant me permission, will you kindly state at what hour I may call?

“Ever your friend, and humble servant,
“DION BLAIR.”

He waited for the answer with some impatience. It seemed unduly delayed, although in reality it had been scribbled, and dispatched at once.

“DEAR LORD DION,

“I suppose I am paying the debt of carelessness. There was a little frost in the streets, and I descended from the chair rather hurriedly. I shall be delighted to see you as soon as you like to come, but please to observe a discreet silence on the subject, as I must own I am rather enjoying the quiet time, and relief from the attendance of some of our friends. I refer only to the sex which, while holding the sceptre of the world, is sometimes uncommonly aware of the fact.

“This does not apply to you. I need hardly say I do not place you in any category. In my regard you stand alone.

“I must own I am curious to hear your news,
L

for if dominance is the note of the other sex, curiosity is the privilege of mine!

“Yours till we meet, and afterwards,

“KATHERINE LOWTHER.”

Lord Dion's servant brought him his heavy, winter surtout, and his hat, and the Malacca cane which his master carried when walking. It was weighted in the gold top on which his hand rested.

A slight drizzle of rain was falling. The manservant suggested fetching a chair, but Lord Dion preferred to walk, respecting Miss Lowther's wish that his visit should not be known. Going on foot would be less conspicuous.

The streets were comparatively empty, the morning not being attractive for promenading.

To reach the house he had to pass General Wolfe's doorstep. He glanced at the windows, but no one was visible. The sight acted as an additional mnemonic. He pictured his friend issuing from the door on that first day when he had ridden “The Don” and established a reputation as an exceptional horseman. Did Miss Lowther think of it every time she passed that way? Did she picture the gallant figure, the delicate, resolute face of the hero?

What did it mean to her?

Lord Dion's footsteps dragged a little as he went on to the next door. The wind seemed keener, the drizzle more depressing. He coughed. He almost wished he had not offered to come, but now that Katherine was expecting him the interview was inevitable.

So, summoning up the mask which we all wear in the ordinary course of life, Lord Dion lifted the heavy knocker. Before it fell the door opened. A footman bowed him in.

Miss Lovesay was crossing the hall-place at the time. On one side was the staircase of carved oak, broad and richly carpeted. On that dark morning, a lamp, hanging from the ornamented centre ceiling, was lighted.

He could not have said why, but it seemed to him at the moment as if he were entering some sacred shrine, some holy place of the Deity. He felt he must lower his tone, and speak as if in the Presence.

Naturally, Miss Lovesay had no such obsession; the place to her was too familiar in its winter aspect.

She smiled, holding out a hand. "I am glad you have come, Lord Dion. You will do Katherine good. She is a patient girl, if ever there

was one, but I have exhausted all my topics of conversation, and, as you know, she does not make friends easily. Except Cecilia Fiennes and Mrs. Wolfe, no one has seen her more than once since she sprained her ankle, now ten days ago." Miss Lovesay glanced mischievously at Lord Dion. "I think Mrs. Wolfe is the most favoured visitor. I suppose you have come on the same errand?"

It was now Lord Dion's turn to feel and look surprised.

"On what errand?" he asked.

"I think the cold must have dulled your wits, or is it due to absence from the sparkling air of Bath?" she queried, satirically. "What does Mrs. Wolfe call here for but to expatiate on the virtues of her unexampled son? And does not Lord Dion sing the same tune as regards his friend?" She clapped her hands impatiently. "You see, I get a little tired of these heroes. Sometimes I prefer common clay, perhaps because it is nearer my own level. In any case, I am not prepared to add a third to this duet, and so, perhaps, I am a little out of favour."

The footman had disappeared, so these two were alone in the hall. "I will show you up to her room, Lord Dion. It is on the first floor."

So saying, with a quick movement, Miss Lovesay passed up the stairs, Lord Dion following. She was always an enigma to him. Often he was afraid of her. Sometimes he almost disliked her, yet underneath there was an assured feeling that she was his friend, which healed any little differences of outlook, any satirical effusions to which she gave vent.

Lord Dion knew the lower part of the house well. He had dined in it on not a few occasions, when Sir James Lowther was in residence. But the upper floor was a *terra incognita*.

Miss Lovesay tapped at a door, and, throwing it open, announced "a friend and a stranger in one." She gave a half humorous curtsy to Dion, as if she were a waiting-woman, then stepped on one side for him to enter. "Leave some of his virtues out, if only for another time!" she whispered.

Lord Dion hardly noticed the remark. His quiet self was unusually perturbed, he could not have said why. It was absurd to think any estrangement, any nervousness, should pervade him on seeing Katherine again after such a short absence. He ascribed the feeling to the fact that he was meeting her under unfamiliar conditions, and in a different environment.

She was sitting in an easy-chair, with wicker-work extension to support the sprained ankle. She held out her hand, half rising.

“You will excuse me getting up,” she said. “I am a prisoner, and at times, when I am inclined to forget the fact, I am speedily reminded.” Lord Dion held her hand in his; he thought it the most beautiful feminine hand possible, and forgot to surrender it. “It is most good of you to come to me,” she went on; “in spite of all the kindness I receive, I find the hours hang a little heavily.” She had begun by speaking as she might do to any friend of her own sex, but the last two sentences had been said with a certain rise and fall of her bosom, an intake of the breath.

Gently she disengaged her fingers from his grasp, and went back to the reclining attitude, from which she had moved to receive her visitor.

Lord Dion drew a chair up, and sat down. His eye travelled over the room, which was of considerable size. It was replete with evidences of her tastes and occupations. A few books, a violin case hanging on the wall, a spinet in one corner, by her side an *escritoire* with writing materials, on a table a pillow with lace, partially constructed, ready to be taken up again. All these

things to a woman would have meant little or nothing—to the man, everything. For the room and its furniture were instinct with the spirit of its owner. Those books were hers. The violin was the one he had heard her play many times, noting her graceful movements, the supple symmetry of her rounded arms. He could picture her handling the bobbin, as she worked at the lace, her dreamy eyes, her thoughts.

Where would her thoughts be?

For a moment he had forgotten himself, forgotten she was looking at him, forgotten the mask which men and women wear, lest they should no longer be able to call their souls their own.

Katherine tried to read his thoughts. She guessed them to be sad ones. She knew perfectly the burden he always bore, and realised the courage with which it was shouldered, the brave spirit within the misshapen form.

To Katherine Lord Dion was one of the best men in the world, true as steel, tender, sympathetic as any woman, but with the courage, the lion-heart of a man.

Well as she knew him, she was assured that there were trackless paths in his mind and character which she had never traversed, depths

she had never been able to sound, enigmas beyond her powers of solution—perhaps beyond his own.

The silence would have been oppressive, but for the fact that a canary, in its cage, every now and again uttered trills of pleasure and satisfaction, perhaps anticipating the advent of sunshine, which the day had as yet denied.

“You look tired,” she said, breaking the silence.

“Then my looks belie me”—now smiling; he had put on the mask. “I have had nothing to tire me. An excellent night’s rest, and plenty of time for breakfast.”

“But the journey must have been a very cold one?”

“I did not find it so. I travelled in luxury.”

“You were not long at Exeter.”

“No, I was anxious to be home again—to see my friends—to see you.”

Katherine blushed. “Not expecting to find me a prisoner,” she said. “You will miss one friend even now you are home. I am told Colonel Wolfe is detained in London. I heard nothing more; his mother was very reticent. I suppose the best of women does not trust another woman with a secret.”

“Is it as bad as that?” Lord Dion laughed.

“I am afraid so. My sex has a bad name—especially here in Bath. But I hope, and believe, it is not wholly deserved.”

“There may have been another reason for Mrs. Wolfe’s silence—the best of all.”

“Yes?”

“The fact that she did not know more.”

“I never thought of that; there seems such absolute confidence between mother and son.”

“Nevertheless, my solution may be the correct one, for James Wolfe’s plans are not his own. They involve such large issues that to let any part of them get abroad might hinder the event. I had a letter from him before I left Exeter; in fact, I remained there longer than I should otherwise have done, on the promise of it. I have it here for you to see.” As he spoke, he withdrew it from the pocket of his surtout. “He tells me only the things which affect himself, leaving out the wider issues.”

“Ought I to read it?”

“It was his wish that you should, not only this one, but any correspondence which may come to me from his hand.”

Katherine looked a little doubtful. She held out her hand with an obvious air of reluctance.

“Of course I shall like to see what he has to say, not merely because of a personal interest, but because of my faith, my hopes,”—she lowered her voice—“my love for my country.” Then she looked at Dion Blair. “You know that Mr. Pitt writes to me, himself, and perhaps he says more to me than he does”—she smiled—“to the few women who are within the circle of his friendship. If, therefore, I read anything of importance in Colonel Wolfe’s letters, the chances are it will not be altogether news to me, but it will have this interest, they will be the letters of one whom Mr. Pitt trusts, to carry out a portion of the great schemes which he has in his mind.”

Lord Dion nodded. “I understand what you mean.”

Katherine held the envelope of the letter in her hand, looking at the handwriting on the cover, but her thoughts were evidently travelling over a wide region.

At length she said : “This year promises to be a great one ; letters like this one will come to mean more and more. We ought to be thankful daily that England has so great a mind at the helm of affairs—a man who has belief in himself and also in his country. I am glad that

Colonel Wolfe admits me into his confidence ; he will have great things to write about, and I shall be one of the first to hear them."

"The letters will be indited to you as much as to me," Lord Dion answered.

CHAPTER XV

AT ELY HOUSE

It was the month of July, a hot, sweltering day, blue sky overhead, the trees drooping their dusty leaves, mutely asking for the rain-drops to come and wash them.

Lord Dion, with a manservant at his back, rode to the great gates of iron scroll-work, which guarded the entrance to the Bishop of Ely's town house, with the frontage on the Strand, and ample garden space at the back, running along the side of the Thames. Next to it, separated only by a narrow lane, was the royal residence of Whitehall.

My Lord of Ely was out of town, but had let his mansion to Sir James Lowther.

Lord Dion had come up the previous day from a small estate he owned in Dorsetshire, on the sea-board, near Poole.

Between two and three months had elapsed since he had parted from his friends at Bath.

The gay city of the west was empty, its visitors scattered throughout the length and breadth of the British Isles, some of them further afield, in Italy.

Katherine Lowther, completely recovered from her sprained ankle, had gone northwards to Cumberland, in the yellow family coach, well guarded by armed retainers, her cousin, Miss Lovesay, accompanying her.

Every now and then a letter had reached Lord Dion from the north, telling him of Katherine Lowther's well-being, full of small chronicles of their doings, also exhibiting an eager quest for knowledge as to the movements, in various parts of the world, inaugurated by Mr. Pitt, the threads of which he held in his hands.

Cumberland seemed so far away from the centre of things. News travelled so slowly, and the information contained in the badly printed rags, which were sent from hand to hand among the country gentry was, as often as not, absolutely unreliable, describing events which had never taken place, being the gossip of the coffee-houses, and the reports of back-stairs menials. Katherine was overjoyed, when she was able to write to her friend that her brother contemplated

a sojourn in London, to extend over a lengthy period, and that he had acquired the Palace of my Lord of Ely for that purpose. Never before had she felt her brother's northern home a place of exile. She wondered at the change in herself. It peeped out in her letters, so that Lord Dion could not fail to distinguish the notes of a certain disquiet, if not exactly of discontent.

Once or twice she had mentioned the name of Colonel Wolfe in writing, when any news had been imparted, generally through Mr. Pitt, of the expedition, which by this time must have reached its destination. Katherine had heard that the weather of the spring months had been specially trying to the fleet, in which Brigadier Wolfe, as he now was, held the chief command, General Amherst not joining until later. She knew the fleet had barely started before it had been driven back, and compelled to take refuge in Plymouth Sound ; that, even when a fresh start had been made, something like two months had elapsed before the Canadian shores were sighted. There her information ceased, at the moment when her appetite had been whetted for what was to follow, as was the case with the whole of patriotic England.

Lord Dion had kept all her letters. He knew them by heart. He strove to read more into them than they actually conveyed, to find out what was at the back of the writer's mind. The question which had faced him, first at Taunton, and afterwards more forcibly during the waiting time in Exeter, was revived by each letter. He pondered it as he walked, hands behind his back, up and down the cliffs, which bounded Seaford Manor, his Dorsetshire Seat.

How far was Katherine Lowther's feeling stirred in the direction of James Wolfe, the gallant, high-souled warrior, whom he himself had first introduced? Open on all other subjects, she was reserved on this one, which interested Dion more than all the others put together. Was it the reserve which guards a secret, which refuses to unlock the door of a maiden-heart, or was there no secret to guard?

He could not account to himself for his mental attitude towards this matter. It puzzled him. Sometimes, when he remembered the domination of Wolfe's mind, his overwhelming affection for his calling, his resolute ambition to succeed in it, he hoped Katherine's heart was not touched. At other times, when the young figure of the man and the beauty of face, form,

and character of the girl met on the stage of his mind, he was brought back to his original idea with reference to the matter, feeling how appropriate, how befitting such a match would be.

Then again there was the opinion of his own heart, the tumultuous feeling which surged in his breast, in spite of the exercise of his will-power to subdue it.

It was when this last phase was most obtrusive that his face became white and drawn, his brow clouded with care, his head bent, until his misshapen shoulder was the most obvious thing about him.

Suffering like this was not by any means his usual attitude towards life. Had it been so, existence would have been rendered almost impossible.

On his arrival in town, where he had apartments always reserved for him, he found a letter awaiting him, the first he had received from Wolfe since they had parted. It was in his pocket now, as he dismounted at the gate of the Bishop of Ely's house. He had brought it while the morning was still young, to read to Katherine Lowther. He could not hand it to her, as some of the descriptions of Wolfe's suffering

on board ship were hardly appropriate for her to read. Wolfe was one of the worst of sailors, and, after the fashion of the day, was accustomed to use little reticence in writing to a man friend. Also he had described, with some vividness of detail, the condition of affairs at Portsmouth, where the recruiting for the expedition had first taken place, a seaport then—in Wolfe's opinion—the worst in the world, as regards its influence on the morale of an army.

Lord Dion's groom took the bridle of his master's cob, as he pulled the pendant iron bell at the side of the door, a stout oaken structure, with bars across it, suggesting resistance to an attack in troublous times.

A servant, in the Lowther livery, said Sir James had gone down the river to Hampton, but that Miss Lowther was, he thought, in the garden. The man knew Lord Dion well, having been on the establishment in Bath.

"I will go to your mistress," Lord Dion replied, "if you will show me the way."

Both pleasure and nervousness, an unwonted nervousness in his case, fought for the mastery, as he followed the man down the well-kept paths, between herbaceous borders, which led to a summer-house, situated in the corner of the

garden, with the waters of the Thames sparkling in the sunshine hard by.

Hearing footsteps, Katherine Lowther laid her book down on a bench by the side of her chair, and rose. When she saw who it was, she advanced towards him with a brisk step, holding out both hands.

"This is an unexpected pleasure," she cried. The expression in her eyes, the glow upon her cheeks emphasised the words.

For a moment or two Lord Dion found himself unable to speak. Something had risen in his throat, half joy, half regret, wholly inexplicable to himself. At length he said, still holding Katherine's hands, "I only arrived in London last night."

"It is most good of you to come here so soon."

"Good of me! You know how I have been longing to see you again. Besides, I have news for you. A letter from Brigadier Wolfe."

"Come to the summer-house, where we can talk without having the sun pouring down on our heads."

She led the way to her retreat, resuming her chair, while Dion sat on the bench near by.

Before them the garden lay steeped in sunshine, the flowers drooping their heads and glow-

ing with colour. Beyond was the broad surface of the river, with a parapet dividing it from the garden, a tow-path, which could not be seen from the place where they were sitting, flanking the parapet. The phosphorescence of the water shone like molten gold.

As Lord Dion looked out on the languorous scene, it contrasted in his mind with the picture conjured up by his friend's words, in vivid description of the conditions obtaining at the seat of war.

After a minute or two of casual conversation, Lord Dion began to read the letter from Wolfe, leaving out the first part, which dealt with the voyage, the discomforts and difficulties of the two months during which they had been buffeted by the winds of the Atlantic, and the delay at Halifax, before the arrival of General Amherst, which had chafed Wolfe a good deal.

Lord Dion began at those eventful days in the early part of June when, for the first time, the formidable fortress and town of Louisburg was seen in the misty light of the morning.

“ . . . ‘ picture to yourself the task upon which we are set, and the difficulties to be over-

come. The fleet, with Admiral Boscawen, has entered the inner harbour. No English summer, no June weather prevails here, I can assure you. Cold fogs freeze us. Heavy seas drive against the teeth of innumerable rocks, flinging columns of white surf towards the sky, which are hurled back again upon reefs and boulders with a reverberating roar.

““ The entrance is about a mile across. In the centre lies Goat Island, which bristles with bastions and forts. Every angle of the coast, on both sides, is guarded by great guns, while barricades of trees afford shelter for riflemen.

““ This morning I scaled the look-out-nest of the frigate, so as to report to the Commander-in-Chief, who was standing below me. With my glasses I swept the whole line of the French position. Beyond the island, which is held as strongly as any place can be, are the masts and flags of a squadron, which is anchored opposite to the town. I counted several line of battle-ships, and four or five frigates.

““ In the distance, stretching away to the hills, are immense forests, lonely, trackless. The river winds away towards Quebec, the goal of our hopes, but before that can be attempted this fortress of Louisburg must fall into our hands.

““ Here we are, some ten thousand British soldiers and sailors, determined to carry our point. On the leaders depends the finding of the way.’ ”

Lord Dion stopped reading. Katherine had been watching him, admiring the soft melody of his voice, noting his change of tone, as he entered into the spirit of the narrative, and pictured the scenes described.

The thought in her mind was one of intense pity. Here was a brave spirit, ready and eager to take his place among those who were fighting for their country, but “cribb’d, cabined, confined,” tied down by the accident of his infancy. She was absorbed in the interest of what she was hearing read, but that did not prevent her woman’s sympathy for the reader.

“Yes,” she said. “I can picture it all. Please continue.”

“There is a break in the letter here. Wolfe takes it up at a point three days later.”

““ I have waited to continue my letter from sheer necessity. Every moment has been occupied since I last took up my pen.

““ The winds have not been favourable to our

undertaking. No boats could put off from the ships to seek a landing-place. We have been buffeted by gale and tide. You can imagine my condition. Under the cover of darkness a sloop, belonging to the harbour-master at Louisburg, tried to creep past us into the open sea. But our watch was too vigilant. We captured it. I was present when General Amherst and Admiral Boscawen examined the French Commander as to the condition of affairs. He said but little. The day has gone by, I am thankful to say, when answers would have been wrung from him by torture. One thing is clear. The Commandant at the fortress and his subordinate officers know a life-and-death struggle is inevitable.

““ After anxious hours and days of incessant watchfulness, the storm abated somewhat. Last night Amherst, Boscawen, Townshend, and myself dropped into a sloop, which was ranged ready, alongside our battleship.

““ We surveyed those portions of the shore, which our glasses told us were most open to the possibility of attack. I shall never forget the excitement of tossing in those stormy waters; the brine-spray against my face, the continual risk of striking some submerged rock, and so engulfing for ever the leaders of our expedition.

““ But God preserved us. We have made our plans. I am entrusted with the leading, when the actual landing is made. How eagerly I look for it can only be measured by the waiting of months, which have elapsed since we started.”

CHAPTER XVI

FROM THE FRONT

THERE was a vibration in Lord Dion's voice, as he went on reading the letter from his friend, which showed his excitement' deepened with the added force of the narrative, as the whole scene opened out in the mind of the writer, and was reproduced by his graphic pen.

“ ‘ The spot we selected for immediate attack is called Freshwater Cove. Three other points were threatened simultaneously, so that our real design should be as little manifest as possible. We started at dawn. With me were twelve companies of Grenadiers, some Canadian Rangers, upon whom we relied for guidance because of their knowledge of the country, a few hundred light skirmishers, and a regiment of Fraser's Highlanders.’ ”

Lord Dion turned to Katherine. “ I can

imagine with what feeling the Brigadier wrote this. I was in Scotland with him when he first conceived the idea that, out of these warring elements of Highlanders, could be formed the finest fighting force of the Army. He urged it again and again on the Government."

"And in the end carried his point, as, I suppose, he usually does." She smiled.

Lord Dion wondered what latent meaning lay at the back of her words. His thoughts were projected into the future, when Wolfe would have returned, with added laurels, his honours thick upon him. Supposing then he wanted something—asked for something? Would Katherine Lowther remember what she had just said, in the summer-house by the sparkling waters of the Thames?

The unanswered questions emphasised the crow's-feet about his eyes; he drew his lips together a little more firmly.

Katherine was not looking at him. Her eyes were fixed on a barge, which was slowly moving with the tide down the river. Her thoughts were still with the component parts of the expedition.

"Mr. Pitt," she said, "was the first man to see the value of the advice given. It is wholly

due to him that the Scottish regiments are enrolled."

Lord Dion nodded. Picking up the letter, which he had laid down, he began to read again, but it took him a full two or three minutes, before the excitement of the theme gripped him once more.

"The boats were lowered, and we started under cover of a heavy fusillade from our fleet, which filled the air with deafening noise, drowning even the thunder of the surf. With the utmost expedition we raced across the open space of water towards the point of debarkation, each boat's crew vying with its neighbour for the place of honour, striving to reach the goal first.

"Dead silence reigned from the quarters of the enemy, but we could see at every point the gleam of cannon, ominous and threatening, while the wooded shore bristled with marksmen, taking advantage of every point of cover, only awaiting the word of command to greet our approach.

"I saw a sword waved in the air, a trumpet pealed forth, then the whole sky was filled with acrid smoke. Flames belched out from a thousand

points. Our boats were struck by a storm of bullets, while shells ploughed the water on every side. Hundreds of bodies, which a few seconds before were those of men eager for battle, covered the surface of the water, showing that the aim of the enemy had been as accurate as the onset was fierce, and, apparently, irresistible.

“‘ I stood by the mast, but seemed to bear a charmed life, for while the ping of bullets sang in my ears, and even ripped my clothes in places, I remained unwounded.

“‘ For the moment the responsibility of the position weighed me down. Was it possible to pursue our course in the face of that murderous fire? The fleet was behind us. Should we turn back for reinforcements?

“‘ Then, thank God, the decision was taken out of my hands. I noticed three of our boats, with the youngest soldiers under my command in them, had effected a landing, having reached a rocky ledge upon which the officers sprang, followed by their men.

“‘ The effect was instantaneous. A cheer rang forth from the crew of all our other boats, which must have been heard at Louisburg. With redoubled energy we all raced to their assistance. The landing was effected. In spite of the

heavy losses which resulted from that fierce defence, we had made good our hold on the first line of attack.

“ ‘The fleet drew nearer, and commenced shelling the enemy’s lines, but they were in no heart to continue the struggle. There was a stampede through the woods. A quantity of cannon, stacked muskets, and accoutrements fell into our hands. Some hundred wounded were left behind. I sent them, with a flag of truce, into Louisburg.

“ ‘This was our answer to the inhuman acts, which have characterised the victorious force during the progress of this war.

“ ‘The blood of our soldiers has been inflamed by the knowledge of what happened after previous engagements. I had to use all my authority to prevent a massacre of the prisoners who fell into our hands.

“ ‘I am thankful that a better day has dawned.

“ ‘I am writing this, by the aid of a lantern, in my tent. We have made good our position, from which no force of the enemy will dislodge us. In the distance I can see the twinkling lights of the French line, while behind us, in the harbour, at bow, stern, and mast-head hang the lanterns of our fleet.

“‘I hope ere long to be able to send you news of even greater successes. Now I lay down my pen in sheer weariness, having, before writing this, completed a short letter to my father.

“‘May God keep us both, and make us worthy.

“‘Your devoted servant and friend,

“‘JAMES WOLFE.’”

Lord Dion had read it through without pause or comment. He felt rather than saw a little stir of the girl by his side. She had held her breath until the reading was over, the narrative completed.

It came to Dion now that no message had been inserted at the close of the letter for the one friend, to whom he had been directed to show the correspondence. Then, again, the beginning of it he had himself felt to be not altogether suitable for her ears.

In these months of absence, and with all the absorption of the glorious task in which Wolfe was playing a part, had he forgotten the instruction? In other words, had he forgotten Katherine Lowther?

He did not dare to look at her, lest his glance should betray his thoughts, lest he should see in

her eyes the reflection of the doubt he had in his mind.

“Colonel Wolfe describes everything wonderfully,” Katherine said, after a long pause. “It is difficult to realise what is happening out there : the hardships, the danger, the bristling forts, the storm-swept shores, and the great range of forests, while we have this before us.” She indicated the river, golden in the sunshine, with a few slow-moving barges and small sailing-ships, listlessly plying on its waters, in the torrid heat of the noon-day.

Now she had spoken the spell had been removed. Dion Blair could look at her. The tone of her voice was even, the rise and fall of her bosom normal. No unusual flush suffused her cheeks, which had now the glow of health and beauty—nothing more.

He had doubted James Wolfe ; now he doubted Katherine Lowther. These two hearts presented an aspect so foreign to his ideas, so different from what he would have felt under the same conditions, that they offered an enigma outside his capacity of solution.

A manservant appeared bringing a tray. On it was a silver heating-dish, hand-chased in some Eastern city, with a lamp under it. By its side

was a silver bowl, containing lengths of chocolate, with tiny dishes of sweet biscuits. The whole was flanked by two cups and saucers of delicate porcelain.

“I had no idea it was as late as twelve o’clock. You will join me, Lord Dion?”

The footman had brought up a small wicker table, after depositing the tray on a bench. He set the whole before his mistress, and retired.

“It is nice to be out here in the open air. It is cooler by the river than anywhere, either in the house or garden. We get the breath of whatever wind there is in this summer-house.”

“It is perfect,” Dion assented. Perhaps this expressed more than the mere words, or at any rate more than she referred to in her remarks.

“Forgive my using my fingers.” She apologised, as she broke the sticks of chocolate into small pieces and dropped them into the cups. She filled the heating-dish with milk. As soon as it boiled, she poured it into the cups. You will find it too hot to drink just yet,” she said. Suddenly she turned to him: “How silent you are.”

He smiled—one of those rare smiles which lit up his face, making him look handsome. “There is so much to think about,” he said, “so much to feel, I cannot talk.”

“But if your mind is full, that is the very time to talk.”

“On the contrary, to keep silent.”

“Selfishness,” she suggested, “to keep it to yourself.”

“It would not do to tell everything that is in one’s thoughts.”

“Not to me, whom you have known for more years than I care to remember—it makes me realise that age is coming on?”

“You will never grow old,” Dion asserted. “Age is a matter of spirit, not of the physical frame.”

“You have turned away on a side issue,” she declared, lifting her cup, at the same time fixing him with an interrogative glance. “What were you thinking of just now, when you said your mind was too full for words?”

Lord Dion shook his head. “One thing, the years have taught me—to hold my peace.”

“‘Even from good words’?” she quoted.

He knew the quotation well, but he did not

finish it aloud, yet the words she had used remained in his mind. There came a time when they seemed to be breathed again into his ear, with a vivid, irresistible force.

But that time was not yet. He began to sip the chocolate.

“What do you think of my concoction?”

What had he thought of it, from the moment he had seen her begin the preparations down to the end, watching her delicate fingers, feeling the glow of her personality close to him—that the touch was on his heart?

“You will certainly lure me here again, at twelve o’clock,” was what he replied.

“You are always welcome, but that goes without saying.”

“Thank you. Before many days are over we ought to have another budget of news.”

“You will bring it here immediately?”

“Without doubt. Something tells me that Louisburg has fallen.”

“You believe in premonitions?”

“Yes, when they are based on facts. We know that the initial step has already been carried out. I am sure nothing short of death itself will keep our friend from the goal he has set himself.”

“Death!” She shuddered. “It seems so far removed from the glow of the noon-day, as we sit here.”

As she spoke the sound of oars came to them. A quick moving boat was passing, very different from the crawling craft further in the centre of the stream, which they had been watching hitherto.

A common interest seized them; they could not have said why. They set down their cups simultaneously, and advanced to the low wall forming the parapet of the river.

A barge was coming towards them rapidly, propelled by watermen wearing the royal livery. In the stern sat a solitary figure; he was wearing no hat—it was on his lap—his wig was pushed back from his brow. There was an eager look in the fine face. He seemed to be reaching forward towards a future, almost within his grasp. His eyes turned neither to the right hand nor to the left.

Katherine Lowther laid her fingers on the lace ruffle of Lord Dion’s sleeve. It was her way of punctuating the situation.

In the stern of the boat was William Pitt. The King was at Hampton. Doubtless his Minister was returning from an audience. Per-

haps he had been imparting the news which Katherine had just heard read?

The boat swept by, without Pitt having noticed them. It disappeared round a bend of the river, in the direction of the Westminster steps.

“One of the greatest men in the world ; one of the greatest men that have ever lived.”

CHAPTER XVII

A THREATENED ATTACK

ON the day that Lord Dion paid his visit to Katherine Lowther, and read to her the letter he had received from Brigadier Wolfe, the latter was in the camp he had formed on the east side of the mainland.

It was the 19th of June. Three weeks of incessant toil, with continuous skirmishing, had given the intrepid young Commander sufficient occupation of the kind he liked best.

It was he who had made good the first landing of the British on the shore, and to him was left, by General Amherst, the forward movement, which went on practically night and day, towards the doomed city.

Wolfe had shown the utmost intrepidity throughout his career, but in these days another very necessary quality had to be exercised. He had acquired it, he displayed it to the admiration of his superiors, with whom he was in constant touch, Amherst and Boscawen. It was caution,

that kind of caution which has regard for the salvage of life.

Night and day they worked to push forward their batteries, dragging up the guns first to the summit of one incline, then of another, but always using the splendid cover provided by the trees, which grew in rank abundance on all sides, as protection against the French.

It was the end of a day which had been filled with the task of mounting a battery, from which shells could be fired on the one side upon the outer fortifications of Louisburg, and on the other upon the remaining ships, which were within the harbour. Those nearest to the English position had already been sacrificed, sunk by the French Admiral, to prevent them falling into the hands of the British. On the half-dozen battleships which remained, were over five hundred guns, and men so thickly massed together that the decks were inconveniently crowded. The guns and extra men had come from the abandoned frigates.

In the dusk of the evening, before nightfall had actually taken place, Wolfe had made his way alone to the highest point of an incline, which bounded the scene of his camp on one side. Here he could obtain the most extensive view of the city. His field-glass was in his hand.

When he reached the ridge, he stood with his back to a giant maple, looking long and fixedly over the whole position. Only three parts of a mile now separated the attacking force from its quarry. Behind him lay the woods, which failed to suggest the fact that several thousand men were encamped under their shadow.

The cry of a night-bird hunting for its prey, the distant bark of a fox, these were the only sounds which broke the stillness. For centuries these woods had resounded with the war-hoot of Indians. Not a few cruel incidents had stained that magnificent foreshore, when straggling bands of white men, their wives and children had fallen into the hands of the hereditary enemy.

In spite of the fact that Wolfe had been strenuously engaged the whole day, his mind occupied with the directing of his men, always in the forefront, not infrequently assisting with his own hands, he felt but little weariness. His was the spirit, which burned so brightly at supreme moments, that the flesh hardly seemed to count for anything.

He lowered his glass, and stood half dreamily enjoying the quiet beauty of the night. It was cold, but he was enveloped in a heavy military coat, which only left his face and hands exposed. He surveyed mentally the actions of those three

weeks which had separated the first onset from that moment. He was a man hard to please. He spared himself not at all. He expected an equal ardour, alike from those who were above him and those who were beneath him. If this was not forthcoming, he was ready to express disapproval, a fact which his letters made clear. But on this 19th of June he was more than satisfied. Every hour had been occupied, vigour and endurance had marked every form of movement. Amherst, though cautious, had proved himself a capable and efficient commander, while he had shown the utmost confidence in Wolfe's capacity.

The city was doomed, of that Wolfe felt sure. It might not fall for a month, or it might be carried any day, but assuredly ere long the tramp of English soldiers would echo through the streets of the "impregnable fortress," proved impregnable no longer.

The thought of the conquest, the picture, which presented itself to his mind of the French flag being hauled down and the British taking its place, acted as a mnemonic to him of that study in St. James's Square, to which he had gone on that winter morning, after he had ridden from Exeter.

Into that same study would come the news

of what had been done. He pictured the strong, keen, dominant face of the great Statesman as the letter, bringing the intelligence, was opened and its contents mastered. He knew that their success would wipe out the disastrous story of former defeat. Pitt had trusted them, trusted Amherst, trusted Boscawen, trusted himself, the youngest Brigadier in the British army!

Wolfe squared his shoulders and drew himself up. The confidence, the approval of William Pitt. Ah! that was something for which to live and die.

From the room in St. James's Square his thoughts passed as if spirit-messages had rapidly traversed the space between. He thought of his parents; he knew that by this time they would be in their house at Blackheath. He thought of Lord Dion, to whom he had written after his first success, the friend of all others whose spirit was most congenial to his own, the man who had never failed him, without guile or selfishness; nay, almost too regardless of self. He thought of Katherine Lowther. He wondered whether she had read his letter to Dion. He had sent no message to her. It must be owned, at the time when it was written, she was in the background of his thoughts, if indeed there at all.

Surely some telepathic message must have been brought from that Palace by the Thames to the solitary watcher in the woods hard by the St. Lawrence? For Katherine Lowther was thinking of him as she paced in the cool of the evening within the garden, listening to the waters as the tide flowed against its banks, very different to the deafening surge which broke against the rocky fringe of the Canadian river.

Katherine, with her woman's instinct, her clear perception, had no hesitation in arriving at the true appreciation of Wolfe's character. She saw into his inmost aspirations, she read his soul as perhaps no one else did, not even Lord Dion. She saw him as a weapon of finely-tempered steel, admirably fitted for the use to which it was being put. She saw him a Bayard, a du Guesclin, a Richard Cœur de Lion, a hero *sans peur, sans reproche*, the kind of man for whom women without number have died, not infrequently with seared hearts, weeping tears of bitter anguish because the love they desired was not accorded to them, or because they lost, all too soon, the crumbs of comfort which had been flung to their hungry souls.

But such men have their limitations. War and fighting, encounter and victory, are the very

breath of their nostrils; the tenderness of a woman's embrace comparatively a small and subsidiary thing.

Wolfe was cast in the hero-mould, and Katherine knew it. It evoked her admiration, but it left her conscious of what was lacking: the failure to respond to the need of her womanhood.

Yet, with it all, she had an admiration which could not be denied for the soldier-quality, the chivalrous soul, all the greater because certain physical drawbacks and disabilities had to be overcome. Katherine's balanced, almost cold, summing up of James Wolfe resulted from a knowledge of what others had offered, laid at her feet, and which she knew he could never give. But balanced opinion goes for little. The moment of contact of soul sweeps it away.

Thus, on the 19th of June, these two were thinking of one another: Katherine Lowther, surrounded by the quiet beauty of a hot English evening; James Wolfe, alone in the midst of tense responsibility, an outpost of an English force, in what was at this time a fiercely hostile environment.

As a matter of fact, allowing for the difference in time between the two sides of the Atlantic, this interchange of thought could not really have

been simultaneous, but it happened, nevertheless, at the corresponding period of time.

Wolfe roused himself from his reverie, or, rather, was roused by that sense of vigilance which marked the true soldier, and underlay the more obvious thoughts in his mind.

From his commanding position, over which by now the darkness had crept, he could see the lights of the French entrenchments, at a distance of rather less than a mile. The object which attracted his attention, causing him to bend forward with his glass at his eye, was the movement of another light from point to point over an area as extensive as the French line itself.

Something was stirring, something was about to happen, something which boded no good to the force Wolfe commanded. He felt sure orders were being carried for a night attack. Instinct told him this, rather than force of reasoning.

The French General had in his service more than a thousand Indian warriors, equipped with a knowledge of the woods, which was not shared by the European soldiers on either side, not even by the Canadian settlers who had been pressed into the service of the French by a *force majeure*, which they were unable to resist.

With the vivid recollection of the massacre at Fort Henry and other recent atrocities, Wolfe hurried back to the valley camp from which he had issued. Sentinels had been posted at all points. He was met by a challenge, giving the countersign in response. They had seen nothing to arouse their suspicion. In fact it was only possible from the single vantage point, which Wolfe had occupied.

A few hurried commands to his subordinate officers, one after another was roused from sleep by a touch and a word of caution, and within ten minutes the message had been whispered from man to man, "The enemy is about to attack. Stand to arms."

Now it was that the discipline which Wolfe had inculcated from the outset, turning his small command into a formidable machine, told its tale. Officers, commissioned and non-commissioned, privates of all arms, fell into their places without confusion, without apparent disturbance or excitement.

Brigadier Wolfe was proud of them. Not a light had been shown, not a command given, which could have been heard as far off as the ring of sentries, yet all were ready. . .

Not a sound broke the stillness of the night. All human life might have been separated from

them by a thousand miles, yet the gallant commander was assured that ever drawing near to them was the contingent of dusky warriors, who, easy to overcome in the open, or when the light shone full upon them, acquired a dread terror when night hid their stealthy movements; when a sudden attack rendered sleepy men easy victims to their cruel onset.

Wolfe divided his force into three parts. One he left in the camp, with instructions to show a certain number of lights, which would deceive the enemy, making them think the camp unprepared; the other two divisions he marshalled, to pass on either side of the canyon, the narrow defile bounded by trees on both sides.

As soon as two hundred yards separated them from the camp, the men were ordered to kneel, taking full advantage of the thick cover of trees and undergrowth.

CHAPTER XVIII

BY LAND AND SEA

THE night seemed abnormally still. It was low tide, so that even the sobbing of the sea along the shore was inaudible. Hardly a breath of wind stirred in the tree-tops.

The little force had effectually hidden themselves. Wolfe alone stood erect, sheltering under an ilex, its branches so thick that no light could penetrate to the ground even in the daytime.

Alert, he seemed all ears. To wait was the most difficult task he could set himself; anything else came more easily to his ardent, impatient spirit. The time seemed unusually long. He began to doubt if his surmise had been correct: some other message might have been signalled along the enemy's lines. He was getting cramped; he shifted his position. Leaves crackled under his feet. He heard a movement like the stealthy tread of an animal disturbed in its lair.

Silence. The same sound again, but nearer, the faintest possible footfalls, the crackling of the dried leaves under the tread of many feet.

Wolfe wondered if he alone heard this. His men betrayed no sign of anything, but among them were not a few who had had considerable experience of back-woods fighting. He felt sure these men at least would recognise that the crucial moment was at hand.

A gleam of intense satisfaction came into his eyes. Before him lay the easy track down the canyon towards the camp. A moment ago it had been deserted, empty. Now it was alive. At least fifty dusky forms advancing at a rapid pace, but with the utmost caution and quietude, appeared at the head of the defile.

Wolfe's eyes had grown accustomed to the dimness. He could distinguish the plumes on the heads of the enemy. Each man carried a musket, as well as the tomahawk which hung at his side, for the French had armed their allies, and taught them how to use weapons hitherto unfamiliar to them.

The fifty or so of them passed down. Wolfe let them go by without any indication of having seen them. He knew well they were only the advance-guard, sent forward to make sure that

the camp was unprepared ; the main body would follow almost immediately.

His expectation was realised. Hardly five minutes had passed before the whole centre of the defile was occupied, as well as the sloping sides of the ravine to the place where the undergrowth began. Hidden in that undergrowth on both sides was the little British force, every man awaiting the word of command, every man ready with his rifle to his shoulder. They were outnumbered four or five to one, but they had no fear as to the result. Long experience had taught them that to fall into the hands of this particular enemy meant slow torture, leading to death from exhaustion.

Bitter hatred, the utmost loathing, was in the breast of every combatant on the English side. Some had lost relatives or friends, foully murdered, in the days when one after another British Generals allowed themselves to walk straight into ambushades, losing half their force, before a blow from their side had been struck. The recruits who had not lost comrades in this way had heard the narrative of what had happened, told round the camp-fires by veterans, the story losing nothing in the telling.

Men fired with such memories as these were not likely to show much quarter. Neither were they

likely to yield while a single muscle remained taut and capable of fighting. The only difficulty was to keep them restrained until the critical moment. This Wolfe's discipline had accomplished, and he thanked God for it as he waited, hardly drawing his breath.

The moment had come. The foremost Indians reached the extreme end of the canyon covered by British guns. The last of the troop had just entered at the mouth of the defile.

Every man under Wolfe had been warned to wait for the signal, to waste no ammunition, to cover the enemy nearest to him with his rifle. The distance separating the British soldiers from the Indians was at no point more than thirty yards.

Wolfe raised a silver whistle to his lips and blew one clear note, which rang through the wood like a trumpet call.

Just at the same moment there came the sound of firing from the camp. This told a tale. The advance-guard of the Indians was meeting with a hot reception, instead of finding a sleeping camp at its mercy.

From every bush there issued a leaping tongue of fire. The acrid smell of gunpowder was on the air, the smoke from the guns rose up, adding to the darkness of the night.

A yell of surprise, the cry of death came from the whole length of the canyon. Wolfe sprang forward, sword in hand.

“Give them the bayonet, boys!”

With an impetuous rush the English force leaped upon the enemy. There was little or no resistance. The destruction caused by the first volley, the onset coming from both sides, the entire reversal of everything the enemy had expected, combined to sweep away any determination they possessed. They turned and fled in all directions, seeking the shelter of the woods, scores of them stabbed through the back, where British bayonets found their mark before escape could be consummated.

Barely an hour had passed, from the time the Brigadier and his force had gone out from the camp, before they were able to return, the exploit accomplished.

Of the fifty advance-guard which had been allowed to make its way to the edge of the camp, nearly thirty had fallen before the rifles of the defenders.

It was a signal victory. More, it was a lesson which Wolfe knew well would strike terror into the hearts of the garrison of Louisburg.

Another step forward had been taken in the inevitable march to victory.

Wolfe sat in his tent and penned a few lines to General Amherst, describing in brief, soldierly fashion what had occurred. That letter is still extant. It reads in such fashion that men looking at it feel the fire of conflict, the throb of courage, the instinct of patriotism rising in their hearts.

Having accomplished the letter, and dispatched it by a trusty messenger, Wolfe sat back in his chair by the side of the single mattress, which, with a few blankets, made up his bed equipment, and lived over again for a few minutes the last exciting hour.

The days that followed were full of strenuous exertion. Wolfe's activities were almost sleepless. Now he was pushing on his small force, until its line of attack was close enough to shell the island, and destroy the forts upon it. Now he was back again with Amherst, stirring up that cautious but capable Commander to advance matters at a more rapid pace. It was said of Wolfe at this time that no one knew where he would be at a given moment: "There is no certainty where to find him, but wherever he goes he carries with him a mortar in one pocket and a twenty-four pounder in the other."

On the 25th of June the island battery was finally silenced by Wolfe's guns, and this most valuable position evacuated by the French.

On the following day the French Admiral himself sank four of his ships, in order to block the mouth of the harbour, and prevent Admiral Boscawen from entering it with the English fleet.

Wolfe stood watching this sacrifice. Then he turned his glass on the *Aréthuse*. Just beneath the place where he stood four English cannon had been brought up, guarded as far as was possible by earth entrenchments. Handling these guns were the finest shots in the British service. Wolfe had seen to their training. They knew they were acting under his eyes. What Pitt was to the Commanders of his various expeditions, Wolfe, on a smaller scale, was to the men under him. They were infected by his enthusiasm. There seemed no limit to what they could accomplish when he was looking at them.

The Brigadier measured the distance between the French battleship and those four guns. Was it possible to reach her with a well-directed shell?

Many an officer would have answered the question in the negative. Not so Wolfe. Things which others called impossible, he regarded as incentives. He leapt from the mound upon which he was standing, and ran to the foremost of the

gunners, a grizzled old soldier from Plymouth, named Abel Crook. Crook had served a gun almost as long as he could remember, both on the harbour defences at Plymouth and on board ship.

Wolfe pointed to the *Aréthuse* with his cane :
“ Can you carry as far as that, Abel? ”

The gunner removed his cap and scratched his head. He wore his own hair long, tied with ribbon at the back. He was not beautiful with the grime of gunpowder on his face, arms, and bare chest.

“ It be a goodish distance, General. I can but try.”

As he spoke, he patted the narrow muzzle of the cannon as if it had been a living thing.

“ I believe you will manage it.”

Wolfe knew that to bring the small battery further up would have entailed making it a target for all the other ships of the French fleet, especially the *Capricieux* and the *Célèbre*. This would entail the almost certain death of the gunners and the dismantling of the guns. He was ever careful of the lives of the men who were under him, although reckless to the point of hardihood of his own.

The great gun had already been loaded by

Crook and his mate. The former now took careful aim, elevating the muzzle to a point which he thought would bring the projectile as near as possible to the *Aréthuse*, if not on her.

Wolfe had gone back to the commanding spot, where he could watch the result.

The gun was fired. The air was filled with smoke. From the distant water of the St. Lawrence there came the sound of a big splash. Nothing was visible, but the noise told its tale—the shell had fallen short.

As the air cleared, the waters could be seen circling outwards from the exact place where the heavy iron missile had descended. Not thirty yards separated the spot where the shell fell from the wooden bulwarks and peeping cannon of the *Aréthuse*.

Wolfe smiled grimly, turning to Crook. “A bare thirty yards,” he said, polishing his glass against his sleeve.

A broad grin spread over the man’s face. A fresh charge was rammed home. Very carefully he once more adjusted his weapon, giving the muzzle a fractional increase of elevation.

Again they waited. The other gunners had come up, and were watching the proceedings. Wolfe stood like a statue, tense, expectant.

Again the great gun sent out its iron message. The smoke from the firing obscured everything once more, but this time there was no sound of the shell falling into the water. On the contrary, there was a crash, cries from wounded men, imprecations in the raucous tones of the enemy.

The wind blew away the smoke, leaving the air clear. Then the result was made plain, the effect of the well-aimed shot manifest. The shell had struck the side of the *Aréthuse* above the water-line, ploughing its way through, smashing the bulwarks to pieces, twisting her guns as if they were so many sticks, killing the men who served them, opening that portion of the side of the vessel to the full view of the English.

“A little more elevation,” the Brigadier suggested to Crook.

“Aye, aye, sir.”

Once more the charge was rammed home, and the great shell hurtled through the air in the direction of the doomed vessel. Another crash indicated that the shot had proved successful. When the smoke cleared off a cheer arose from the little group of English gunners, which was taken up by a company of the Light Infantry,

who had come up at the double, as soon as the sound of firing reached them.

The mainmast of the *Aréthuse* must have been struck. The upper portion lay on the deck splintered to pieces, with some of the crew lying wounded around and under it. The captain of the French ship could be seen giving hurried orders, while the sailors ran to their stations with a speed which suggested panic. In the shortest possible space of time the anchor was raised, and the *Aréthuse*, almost disabled, was making for the outer harbour. Abel Crook sent a parting shot after her, which failed to reach its mark. This time the *Aréthuse* anchored well out of range. But, impossible as a target, she was also ineffective for defence purposes. It was now possible to bring up the English cannon a stage nearer, where the shells could fall on the town and citadel of Louisburg.

Throughout the whole of that day a swarm of carpenters was engaged on the *Aréthuse* in repairing the breach made in the ship's side and splicing the mainmast, so as to make her seaworthy. In the darkness of the night the vessel crept out of the harbour, and was no longer visible, when Wolfe, at dawn, went once more to the point of observation.

The *Aréthuse* had avoided the ships sunk in the tideway, and had managed to get out of the basin of the St. Lawrence into the open sea. She had, in fact, started for France to make one last despairing appeal to the Home Government, to send strong reinforcements with a view of saving the doomed city.

Long after this Wolfe learnt that the ill-fated *Aréthuse* had been pounced upon by British cruisers in the open sea, so that she never reached her destination.

On the 21st of July the greatest disaster which had as yet happened to the besieged force took place. The handwriting was on the wall. The doom of the great city and fortress was pronounced. The letters were of fire.

Once more the English gunners demonstrated the excellence of their aim. Within range was one of the finest warships the world of that day had, *L'Entreprennant*. She carried seventy-four guns, and had a picked crew of the best French sailors and marines. Into the very centre of this vessel a bomb was fired. A portion of the shell struck the powder-magazine, which blew up with a reverberating roar, heard far out to sea by the cruisers which patrolled the coast. Fire broke out, which rapidly spread, in spite of all efforts

of the intrepid crew to check its progress. It was a dry, hot day, with a light wind blowing. The latter carried the sparks to the nearest battle-ships, the *Capricieux* and the *Célèbre*. Within half-a-dozen hours the Governor of Louisburg had the bitter experience of seeing the three fine vessels burnt to the water's edge.

CHAPTER XIX

GOOD NEWS AND BAD

“As fine an action, by the lord Harry, as was ever carried out in the history of the British Navy!” Boscawen cried. “I am proud to have such Captains under me, and such men to follow their lead.”

At a wooden table, rudely shaped, a planed log for the top, and three untrimmed stumps for legs, sat the men upon whom rested, at that moment, the destiny of England, as regards its Empire across the seas. Amherst, with his large, hooked nose, his keen hazel eyes, his moustache and pointed beard carefully trimmed, as if he had been on parade in England; Boscawen, the burly sailor, bronzed and hairy, with a white line showing on his forehead where his peaked-cap usually ended; Wolfe, nearly twenty years junior to both of them, with large and lustrous eyes, his face so emaciated that his cheek-bones showed clearly, leaving hollows beneath, the fire in his eyes ever

sparkling as he turned from one to the other, while the ball of conversation rolled between them. Two lanterns, one hanging overhead, the other on the wall of the tent, close to the opening, cast flickering rays over the strong features of the officers and the rough accessories of the Commander-in-Chief's lodging. Outside could be heard the tramp of the sentries, as the dry leaves crackled beneath their tread.

These men required no gift of imagination to supply the background of this ever-memorable story. They knew well the aspect of the battered and beleaguered city. Not a wall was without its defacement, not a building without its shell-mark. The terrible ravages of fire were in the citadel itself, and the wooden barracks, erected only a few years earlier, had been offered as a holocaust to the sky above, as the effect of some well-directed shots on the part of the English cannon. Not two hundred yards from the tent were the rocks which bounded the shores of the St. Lawrence, which had seemed so formidable, when first viewed by the attacking force, only a few months previously. Away at the back for miles stretched trackless forests and impenetrable morasses.

It was with reference to an action of the previous night that Boscawen's remarks were made.

He himself, who had planned it, described the exploit as "a particular gallant action."

Only two French ships remained of the fine fleet which had been collected in the harbour, when the English expedition reached the mouth of the St. Lawrence. These were the *Prudent* and the *Bienfaisant*, the first with seventy-four guns, the second and smaller vessel with ten less. Hitherto, the main part of the fighting, and no inconsiderable share of the glory, had fallen to the land force, which General Amherst had personally controlled. The sailors, eager and ready, had played a secondary part, from the time the original landing had taken place. Now they were eager to have their portion in the final victory, the ultimate conquest, before it was too late. Thus it came about that Captains Balfour and Laforey asked permission to make a night attack on the two remaining French ships. Boscawen agreed with some hesitation. He knew perfectly well, that if such a thing had been attempted on any two of his own frigates or line-of-battleships, terrible would have been the fate of the invaders; not a boat would have remained intact, not a man left to tell the tale. Nevertheless, he agreed. Victory was in the air. He believed the god of battles was looking on with approving smile. The superstition of success fired the heart of

every British sailor, from the Admiral downwards.

The night fell dark as pitch. Fog, which had been hanging over the landscape at sundown, settled upon the water. It impregnated the air, it hid the features of shore and tideway. The breath of the men as they pulled at their oars was white with particles like frost. Silently, stealthily, they crept towards the unsuspecting vessels. The utmost care was taken by the steersmen to keep a course as straight as possible, and to avoid any collision in the abysmal darkness. As they approached the French men-of-war, the little fleet of boats separated, one of the captains leading his men to surround the *Prudent*, the other heading for the *Bienfaisant*.

The thickness of the fog, and the darkness of the night, initial difficulties as they seemed, proved the most potent allies of the intrepid attackers. Hardly a watch was kept on board the French ships. It seemed incredible that any attempt at capture should be made, even by these islanders who had dared and done so much, on such a night.

The boats of the Englishmen were supplied with rope-ladders, with iron hooks attached, which could be thrown and fastened to the bulwarks. Sailors swarmed on board, cutlass

in hand, before a vague cry roused the sleeping men from their bunks. Some slight show of resistance was made by the marines and sailors, who hurriedly snatched up weapons, but it was immediately overborne by the fierce onset of the English crews.

An attempt to get the *Prudent* away from her anchorage failed, owing to the condition of the tide. Captain Balfour decided to set her alight, having first put the French seamen into boats, with instructions to make for the land.

The flare of the ship seen through the enveloping fog and mist was an awesome sight. It cheered the hearts of the invaders, whilst it sent a chill through the garrison of Louisburg.

In the light thus created the *Bienfaisant* was got under weigh, and safely brought within the lines of Admiral Boscawen's fleet.

This was the narrative which the Admiral had been relating to Amherst and Wolfe, bluntly told in bare outline, but with an obvious thrill of pride and satisfaction.

"You are right, Boscawen. No sailors could have done better, not many as well." Amherst agreed.

"To-morrow, with your concurrence, General, I shall follow it up by bringing my ships into

the moorings which the French occupied to-day," Boscawen said. "The town will then be at our mercy."

Amherst shook his head.

"You do not agree with me?" Boscawen exploded, his colour rising.

These two officers had been excellent friends, and had worked together with an accord, hitherto unknown, in the recent history of the two Services, but now there promised to be a breach between them.

Wolfe looked anxiously from the one to the other, wondering what word he could put in to smooth over the difference. Friction at this juncture might mean the retarding of success, if not the failure of their plans.

His intervention was unnecessary.

Amherst smiled. "Your plan, Admiral, is an excellent one, and, without doubt, would put the crowning touch to our efforts, but its execution happens to be unnecessary."

"In what way, sir?" Wolfe cried. He had been invited to the small council by the General in command, without any cause having been assigned for the summons. It was certainly not to hear Boscawen's news, for he had seen the departure of the boats on their expedition, the conflagration when the *Prudent* was burnt, and

the triumphant return with the *Bienfaisant* as the trophy.

Amherst was one of those quiet, self-contained men who speak infrequently, consequently with additional weight.

"I have had private intelligence to-day," he said, "from within the enemy's lines. The morrow, if I am not misinformed, will witness the end of the siege. Governor Drucour is at the furthest limit of his resources. The white flag will be hoisted from what is left of the citadel by ten o'clock. There will then be *pourparlers* as to the terms of surrender."

Wolfe rose at this announcement, his eyes blazing. "Thank God," he cried. His thoughts had gone back to the library in St. James's Square, to the Great Man out of whose brain all these conceptions grew. He thought of what this news would mean to him, racked with pain, surrounded by adverse critics, but, nevertheless, the idol of the nation, with the whole of public opinion at the back of him, strong in the confidence of the great city of London, patriotic as it has ever been.

Amherst, with a gesture, indicated that Wolfe should be seated again.

"You are sure of your intelligence, General?" Boscawen inquired, leaning forward eagerly, rest-

ing his head on his hands, his elbows on the table.

“Absolutely. It came from Governor Drucour’s favourite secretary. The only question which remains is a matter of terms.”

“There can be only one answer,” Boscawen said.

Amherst looked at him, then he said, in his quiet way: “Exactly. We can take nothing but unconditional surrender. Failing that, your ships shall enter the harbour, and the guns on the land side will attack in force ere the day is done. That was the answer I gave to M. Poincarré.”

Wolfe breathed a sigh of relief. There had been too much of concession in the past, of conditional surrender, when some small success had come in the way of the British arms. What North America wanted, what France wanted, what the whole world wanted, was a lesson that the intrepidity of the English race remained as of yore. If the garrison marched out with all the honours of war, the lesson would be only half taught.

“It will not be a pleasant message to carry to the Governor,” Boscawen commented. “He is a brave man, and has a hot temper withal.”

Amherst agreed. “I doubt not Drucour will

try to save his face. In fact, Poincarré admitted as much. He will ask for more, and take less, but only under compulsion."

"It would be a fine argument to bring the ships within musket-range of the walls with the dawn," Boscawen suggested.

"I think it will not be necessary. In any case the tide—as you know, Admiral, better than I—will not serve before the hour named. In addition, I have given my word that nothing shall be done on our side, until the negotiations have been settled one way or the other."

Boscawen rose. "That settles it. I can go to my bed. I have not had my clothes off these forty-eight hours."

Amherst shook him warmly by the hand. "No man could have a more loyal colleague or a better ally. I am not likely to forget how much of the success of our expedition is due to you and your fleet."

"Thank you."

The burly Admiral left immediately after this. Outside were two of his officers and a small squad of men, who had formed his escort. These had remained just beyond the line of sentries.

Wolfe and his commanding officer were alone.

"This is good news indeed, sir, and earlier than I expected," Wolfe commented.

"The town is riddled with shot, and the citizens fear that further resistance would exasperate our side and bring upon them stern retribution."

A challenge from the sentries. An answer in few words, apparently satisfactory.

Immediately afterwards a *courrier-du-bois* appeared at the opening of the tent.

Amherst and Wolfe had already hurried to the doorway. A foreboding was in their hearts, for which neither of them could account.

News had come. Why should they think it bad news?

The courier saluted the two officers. He was wearing the green surtout and breeches of untanned leather which indicated his occupation. "General Abercromby has met with defeat at the hands of Marquis Montcalm."

A paralysis of silence had come over both Amherst and Wolfe. It seemed as if neither of them could make a comment or ask a question.

After the pause, the courier continued: "Lord Howe was killed at the first onset."

Then Wolfe found tongue. "Good God!" he cried. "Howe killed! The best and greatest

soldier England possessed.” With lightning rapidity his thoughts went once more to the soldier as he had seen him, standing on the steps of Pitt’s house, offering his arm to assist him into the house.

Lord Howe was dead !

CHAPTER XX

SURRENDER

“THE one is taken, the other left.”

General Amherst could have bitten his tongue off for saying this. The voice was his own ; he undoubtedly uttered the words. He was the vehicle, nothing more. How they came to him, and why he said it, he could not have told. He was a man who was habitually cautious, slow of speech as he was deliberate of action.

The *courrier-du-bois* had left the General's tent to seek that of the orderly, some dozen yards away, who would find him accommodation. These *courriers-du-bois* had exchanged their original trade of hunting, trapping, and shooting to become messengers between the various bands of soldiers, who were carrying on warfare in that vast territory at different points long distances apart. These men carried their lives in their hands, and were always liable to attack from Indian tribes who infested the territory. Their hazardous calling was well paid. The rapidity

with which they traversed the country was extraordinary, considering the spaces covered, and the difficulties encountered by the way.

Amherst and Wolfe were standing in almost the same position as they had been when the messenger arrived. They seemed turned into stone by the terrible news. To Amherst the outstanding fact was the defeat of Abercromby, one of the three Generals specially selected by Pitt for the combined operations. To Wolfe, the death of his friend Lord Howe occupied the central point, almost to the exclusion of all else. He was stunned to silence; silence which, as it were, could be cut with a knife, by Amherst's quotation from Holy Writ. "The one is taken, the other left."

Wolfe turned swiftly.

"Yes, but for how long? "

There could be no doubt about the General's meaning. Howe had gone, laying down his life for his country, dying in the way he would have chosen. What about his friend? Wolfe?

Amherst looked at the glassy eyes, dulled now by the sorrow at the back of them, the drawn, emaciated face with its transparent skin beneath the tan, effects produced by the out-of-door life of hardihood they had all been enduring during the last few months.

No one thought much more of Wolfe than did his superior officer ; it appears repeatedly in his letters. Where there was a place requiring courage, determination, military ardour, there he set the Brigadier, with every confidence that he would win his way.

But—it was a large “but”—how long would that spirit inhabit the frail casket? If James Wolfe did not fall, as Howe had done, by the hands of an enemy, he carried within him another foe, whose presence could never be doubted or forgotten—his physical condition. Yes, for how long? Amhurst turned away, as Wolfe put the question not expecting an answer. Who could forecast the future? What wise man would wish to do so, even if the capacity were offered to him?

A minute or so later Wolfe held out his hand, to say good-bye to his chief.

“This will, I fear, make all the difference to our plans,” Amherst said. “It puts Quebec further away. Abercromby must come first. Who knows what straits he may be in?”

“I am ready to go to him at a moment’s notice,” Wolfe replied, in a colourless tone. The shock was so severely upon him, that he was unable to rise even to the thought of fresh work and quick endeavour.

“Thank you. I know. I must question the ‘courier’ further, but not now. Louisburg must be thought of first. We must have some message to send home, which will help to remove the stigma of Abercromby’s failure.”

Wolfe knew the General was thinking of William Pitt. The Brigadier saluted and went out. The night, which had been misty, was now clear. A moon almost at the full was shining upon thicket and wood. In the distance the river gleamed like molten silver. Wolfe felt as if it were some one else, not himself, walking where his footsteps trod. All things were unreal to him in the brilliance of the Canadian night—phantasms, unrealities, himself the most so of them all. The small body-guard he had brought with him fell in, before and behind, without a command. Wolfe was almost incapable of giving one.

Howe was dead ! Howe was dead ! This was what rang in his ears, echoing from earth and sky. His friend of long standing, the man he admired and believed in most of the whole British Army had fallen, struck probably by a foul blow, shot from behind a tree, the victim, perhaps, of some treacherous Indian, who might have even mishandled that glorious soldier.

Wolfe was walking alone. The news had

already been whispered among the men who were escorting him, and who loved him with the devotion a true soldier has for his leader when the leader is worthy. With instinctive courtesy officers and men left him to the seclusion of his thoughts. They knew him to be suffering, but the hour was not come for the expression of their sympathy. There are occasions when people must bear their burdens alone. The wise recognise that time and stand aloof.

The nearer they came to Wolfe's encampment the closer they were to the beleaguered city. They could see the twinkling lights of Louisburg as if a hundred flaming eyes were looking out upon them with apprehension, dread of the morrow.

Wolfe had been eager, feverishly eager, to surmount each difficulty as it came. The thirst for conquest had been upon him, from the moment of their landing, ever spurring him on to fresh endeavour. Now it had gone, vanished utterly. The fruit, long sought, was hanging within his grasp; he only had to stretch forth his hand to take it. Nay, it would fall, in any case, on the morrow. But reaction had come, a reaction which would pass with the breath of the night, but which for the moment was strong beyond everything else, with the

exception of that one bitter regret, the loss of Howe.

He pitied the city, he pitied the brave spirits of its defenders, mastered and beaten down by hard circumstance, the gallant Governor Drucour, and his men. He saw the fortress like the bruised body of a man who had been fighting against foes too strong for him, his body battered all over. When he walked the streets they would have little to tell him he did not already know, for what his glass had not revealed his imagination could supply. Fire and shell had written their terrible story on wall and rampart.

Suddenly he stopped. Nearly a mile away to the right was a long ridge, bare at the top, but with bulrushes and giant ferns covering the lower parts of the slope, growing luxuriously in the morass which flanked the ridge on that side. Wolfe was roused from his reverie. He no longer walked with bent head. Visible on the top of the ridge, surmounting it, then disappearing with great rapidity on the other side, were hundreds of dusky figures. A few minutes earlier they would have been invisible, but the full moonlight picked them out, and revealed them to Wolfe and his following.

Indians! Wolfe hated them with all the ardour of his nature. The most merciful and con-

siderate of soldiers with reference to the brave foes encountered and overcome, he made an absolute exception in his dealings with the Indian tribes, in alliance with the French. They were shown no quarter when they fell into the hands of his troops.

Years of treachery, of insensate cruelty lay behind. Peaceful frontiersmen, small communities of settlers with their wives and children. Upon these "the braves" had descended, and had wreaked upon them every species of cruelty, every variety of torture which their imagination could supply.

Then, again, in the smaller engagements which had marked the war from the beginning, when the English had been worsted, the same results had followed. The massacre of Fort Henry, for instance, was still vivid in the minds of every soldier under General Amherst's command.

To what purpose were these Indians marching at night? Certainly not to attack the strongly entrenched British force. Such an idea was ludicrous. The attempt they had made on Wolfe's much smaller command had taught them a salutary lesson.

Quick as thought Wolfe unslung his glass and covered the ridge. He saw the Indians had

packs fastened on their shoulders, probably containing cooking utensils and provisions. These were not warriors only, for not a few squaws and some children were among the swiftly-moving mass. Wolfe understood. The Indians were fleeing from the doomed city. Whatever terms might be granted to General Drucour and the five or six thousand men, made up of regulars, Canadians, and sailors, under his command, would certainly not be extended to the allied Indians, who were outside the pale of agreement. Well aware of this circumstance, the darkness of the night was being utilised to cover their escape.

By this time Wolfe had almost reached the first battery, which guarded that side of his entrenchment. The gunners were awaked from their sleep, the cannon slewed round to play upon the ridge. The stillness of the night was broken by a discharge of artillery which scattered grape among the retreating forms of the Indian "braves;" with what result it is almost impossible to say, for by the time the smoke of the firing had cleared away not a single dusky form was apparent to the onlookers of the camp.

A few minutes later General Amherst sent a mounted messenger, to inquire the cause of the firing, receiving the explanation. This was the

final act in the siege of Louisburg. On the following morning, at ten o'clock, a white flag was hoisted from what remained of the citadel.

Pourparlers followed. Drucour made the best possible efforts to evacuate with honour. He asked that they might be allowed to march out with the honours of war, although, after the secret interview accorded to his secretary on the previous day, he was aware no such suggestion could be entertained.

The fact of Abercromby's defeat only served to strengthen Amherst's decision, to make every unit of Drucour's force a prisoner. If they were allowed to retire, they would go to swell the frontier force, which ranged itself opposite the remnants of Abercromby's command.

The Governor made a show of further resistance, but yielded to the expostulations of the inhabitants of Louisburg, who feared to see their city given up to rapine and carnage, if the British force had to carry the walls and ramparts with the bayonet.

On the 26th of July, at midnight, all the conditions of surrender had been settled, the final papers signed in General Amherst's tent. On the morning of the 27th, with Wolfe and his command in the van, the British force marched

into Louisburg. Unalloyed success had so far crowned their efforts. The key of the St. Lawrence had fallen into their hands. "Quebec next" were the words which sprang naturally to a thousand minds. Only the leaders knew that fresh obstacles barred their way, and would necessarily postpone the second great act in this drama to another year.

Governor Drucour had paraded the force under him on the esplanade. Soldiers and sailors, in almost equal numbers, were ranged in sullen and downcast lines. General Amherst, with Admiral Boscawen by his side, received the Governor's sword. The men were told to pile their arms. They stood defenceless, ready to be marched to the ships in the harbour for transport to England.

The flag of France had been hauled down with the dawn. The British ensign was run up in its place, amid a salvo of artillery, fired both from the land forces and from the fleet.

Wolfe was one of the first to march into the city, his rapid glance taking in the effects of the bombardment Louisburg had undergone, especially during the last two weeks, when the range had become more effective. His feeling of the night before had entirely passed. Now he was

learning lessons for the future from what he saw before him.

Louisburg was in more senses than one the key to Quebec. Alone its capture was an achievement. In conjunction with what lay before them, it was, Wolfe firmly believed, an augury. Nevertheless, across the landscape lay the shadow of Abercromby's defeat, involving delay, if nothing else.

Wolfe was not actually present when the six thousand men laid down their arms and surrendered their colours on the esplanade. Brigadier Whitmore had been told off for that duty: not a pleasant one for a generous foe, involving as it did the humiliation of brave men.

General Amherst had entrusted Wolfe with two other duties, each of them implying a compliment. The first was to post sentries along the walls and to take control of the city, to prevent pillage and outrage. Wolfe's influence with the men, and his capacity for discipline, marked him out as specially fitted for the task. The second commission was of a more delicate nature. He was to call upon Madame Drucour and the ladies, wives of the principal officers, to reassure them as to the future.

He found them assembled under the

Governor's roof. He described his experience in a letter to his mother—

“The ladies were pale and worn. They had suffered much mentally during the last two weeks, and were somewhat apprehensive about the future.”

Wolfe had sufficient command of French to reassure them. The prisoners would be sent to France with all possible consideration and respect. Neither was separation from their wives likely to be of long duration.

It was the first time he had encountered a gentlewoman since his departure from England. The refinement of the Governor's wife carried his thoughts back to the circle at Bath, to his mother, to Katherine Lowther. Little as he valued his own exploits, which to him represented merely duty—nothing more—he knew the story of these happenings would reach those he had left behind.

When his visit to the ladies was concluded, and he had bowed himself from their presence, he spent the next two hours in passing from outpost to outpost, along the city walls. His duty was mechanical. It gave him ample time for reflection, thought, memory.

The idea which he had nearly thrust from

him at the inn at Taunton, the thought that one day he might find that intimate association which we connect with the word home, came upon him now with a rush of feeling.

In the weeks that followed, when he was engaged in carrying out certain operations in the higher reaches of the river which were utterly distasteful to him, and later, when on his way back to England, the picture which he had formed on the ramparts at Louisburg, assumed an importance which grew with the passing of time.

CHAPTER XXI

WILLIAM PITT

A SOLITARY figure was standing by one of the divisions of the windows which overlooked the King's Bath. A number of people were disporting themselves in the steaming water, but the eyes of the figure in the window were not directed towards them. He was gazing into space, occupied with his own thoughts, caring nothing for the throng seeking health in the room at the back of him, where the waters were being drunk, or for that other company of men and women beneath him in the Bath.

Many curious glances were turned in his direction, but although not a few of the water-drinkers enjoyed his acquaintance after a limited fashion, not one stepped forward to break into his reverie or exchange the ordinary small talk of the morning.

The month of October was drawing to a close—keen, fresh, vigorous, stimulating, yet the

figure already referred to was warmly wrapped in furs. A mixture of delicacy and strength, of physical weakness and moral power, formed the blend which all men recognised, so clearly was it expressed in those striking features: the hooked nose, the eyes somewhat close-set together, dull, opaque, heavy, as he stood now, but capable of flashing into brilliancy, with a gaze that could wither an adversary and scorch an opponent before a single word passed the lips.

In that room was standing the greatest Statesman of the age, one of the most powerful characters England has produced, the genius of his time and the admiration of his successors, the man of the hour, William Pitt.

He had snatched a few days from the incessant toil of his great position to go to Bath, there to drink the waters which experience told him, as well as his physicians, had a therapeutic effect on his health. In the city he stood aloof from his fellows as he was standing that morning. It was the same in London, the same in the House of Commons, which he ruled with a nod or rebuked with a frown.

The eagle, except in the mating season, lives solitary, soaring over mountain fastnesses, hunting its prey alone, while birds and beasts fly from

its approach. William Pitt was the unmatched eagle of the world of his day.

He had slowly consumed the amount of water allotted by his doctor. He stood his glass down on a small marble table, which an attendant had obsequiously placed at his elbow, then turned to make his way out of the room.

For an instant his eyes, under half-veiled lids, swept the saloon, glancing from group to group with absolute indifference.

This attitude changed when he perceived Lord Dion Blair, who was also on the point of finishing his modicum of water and leaving the Pump-room.

Pitt bowed to a good many of his acquaintances as he passed along, walking more freely than was his wont, owing to the fact that his gout was less insistent than usual. As he came to the spot where Lord Dion was standing, the latter turned, his face lighting up as he saw Pitt.

The Statesman linked his arm into Blair's. They left the saloon together.

In spite of the interest, which was shared by every person present, no jealousy was felt in consequence of the preference Pitt openly showed for Lord Dion. The physical disability

and the perfect absence of self-appreciation, the unfeigned humility of Blair, disarmed all criticism and rendered jealousy impossible.

Pitt drew him through the more crowded streets, until they passed the Abbey and reached the Orange Grove. They were now close to Colgrave's coffee-house. Lord Dion indicated it with a nod.

"I have promised to meet Miss Lowther and Miss Lovesay here in half-an-hour's time. Why not join the party?"

Pitt hesitated. It was against his ordinary practice to take a meal in public, unless it so happened that he was obliged to attend some political banquet, when he invariably came late and left early.

"There will be no one else of the party," Lord Dion urged. "Miss Lowther's table is in a secluded corner, where we shall be undisturbed."

A sardonic smile wreathed Pitt's mouth. "You are empowered to act as host for the lady?" he inquired.

Blair flushed hotly. "Not as regards others," he said; "but you are different. She will be delighted, honoured, and I am only expressing her wishes."

“Thank you. Then I will come. In the meantime I want to talk to you.”

They paced the Grove, the fresh wind on their faces.

“I consider Bath is at its best just now. I am sorry I shall be obliged to leave it so soon.”

“Is it impossible to extend your visit? You are already better than you were when you arrived—I can see it.”

“Yes, that is true, or I should not be walking so easily. But the demand is imperative. I am only awaiting news of Admiral Boscawen’s arrival at Portsmouth to hasten to London. That may come any day. It is proposed to give him a great reception. I have undertaken to move the thanks of the House of Commons to General Amherst and the Admiral. The citizens will give the victors of Louisburg an enthusiastic welcome. The King, too, is in one of his best moods on the matter.”

“The victors!” Blair quoted.

“Yes, for, as you know, Wolfe comes in the Admiral’s ship. He has equalled your expectation and exceeded mine. General Amherst has been most generous in his praise of him”—

Pitt stopped a moment, then went on—"in spite of the fact that he almost got out of hand at times. Wolfe is evidently one of the men fitted to command, and finds a subordinate position rather difficult, when his superior officer is a trifle cautious in his methods."

"Slow," Dion interjected, loyal to his friend.

"Caution is apt to be slow. Wolfe seems able to combine both qualities — precaution with intense vigour in action, wariness with dash."

Dion was greatly pleased at Pitt's analysis of his friend's abilities.

"I am delighted to hear you say this. We shall indeed welcome his return to Bath."

"Make the most of the time. I cannot spare him for long. There are opportunities opening for the British arms. Wolfe's sword will not rust in its scabbard."

"He is the last man to wish it."

"I am aware of that. I have made up my mind to entrust him with the central position in the scheme I have on foot."

They had turned in their pacing up and down, and were now facing the entrance of Colgrave's coffee-house. Several people passed in as they

strolled near. When they reached within a few paces of the entrance, after a lull in the arrivals, Katherine Lowther and her cousin came round the corner. They were engaged in animated converse. Katherine's face lit up with laughter at some remark her companion had made.

Pitt looked at her with a quizzical interest.

"Some women," he said, "seem to be made to break hearts and keep their own intact. It is a perilous gift for mankind. Miss Lowther, if all I hear is correct, seems to be one of them, her heart a citadel, unlike Louisburg, incapable of being carried by assault and battery."

Lord Dion did not reply. Instead he looked at Katherine, as if he would try her in the fresh light Pitt had just thrown on her character. Was it true her heart was impregnable? That in spite of her kindliness and sympathy towards suffering, in the central matter of a woman's existence she could offer nothing in return for love but placid friendship? While he was half unconsciously asking the question, and seeking the answer in the beautiful animated features of the girl, she became conscious of his fixed gaze, by that telepathy which indicates to

all of us at times a concentrated look in our direction.

Her eyes softened, the laughter died out of them, giving place to a wistful regard, as if she sought a caress, mental, if not physical.

Pitt, who noticed everything when once his interest was aroused, wondered. In his turn he surveyed Lord Dion, pondering on the problem as to how he was likely to be regarded by the opposite sex, when once the first sense of his deformity had been removed by more intimate acquaintance. Was physical perfection of form so preponderant to a woman that nothing could weigh against it in the balance? To Mr. Pitt, who was not given to hero-worship, seeing men with a fine accuracy, reading them like an open book, Blair represented all that was best in the pure gold of character. Much as the Statesman admired success, greatly as he appreciated the heroes on sea and land who were making for him a reputation such as no other statesman in the world had ever enjoyed, he accorded to none of them, not even to Wolfe, the same guerdon of estimation which he gave Lord Dion for his simple purity of nature, tried by suffering, built upon self-sacrifice, almost to the point of self-annihilation.

All this occupied but a flash of time. Then they met the ladies, and after exchanging the courtesies of the morning, Lord Dion said—

“Miss Lowther, I have ventured to act as your representative, and secure for you a guest after your own heart.”

“Are you going to breakfast with us, Mr. Pitt?” Katherine flashed out, a look of pleasure in her eyes.

“If you will permit me.”

“Permit! It is an honour we shall much appreciate.”

“Yes, to me.” Mr. Pitt bowed.

That was a wonderful breakfast which followed in the secluded corner of the fine room. It happened the table next to them was unoccupied when they entered. Mrs. Colgrave took care that it remained empty during the time the distinguished party was present. It was something for her to relate afterwards that Mr. Pitt had partaken of breakfast in her rooms.

The conversation turned on the exploits of the last few months. Mr. Pitt showed an amazing acquaintance with the details of the campaign. He had correspondence which covered the whole area of the operations, some of the letters of the

ordinary public nature, rendering an account to the first Minister of the Crown, others of a quasi private character, which gave individual estimates contributed by personal friends or officers in the intimacy of the Statesman.

Pitt had welded all this together into a complete and coherent whole. Perhaps to no one else would the Minister have unbent as he did that morning to his three auditors, although there was nothing said, of course, which could not have been proclaimed upon the house-top.

As Katherine listened, and Mr. Pitt drew the picture, she understood how large a place in the foreground was occupied by General Wolfe. In the glowing words of the narrator she realised the hero. To a woman like herself, nobly born, enthusiastically loyal to her country, inherently capable of appreciating all that is best, such words produced an intense effect. Wolfe had, to a certain extent, passed out of her thoughts, but as Pitt spoke he came back to her mind. She saw him before her, returning to England to receive the gratitude of the nation. In his heroism thus pictured she saw her ideal, and perhaps failed to understand that enthusiasm and admiration cannot take the place, when the

marriage bond is in question, of the one central tie, between men and women, which we call love. She rose from the table conquered by an ideal, her heart beating in response to an image fashioned largely by her imagination.

CHAPTER XXII

RETURN

It was the 1st of November, 1758. The short afternoon was drawing to a close, the sky was obscured, a slight drizzle of rain falling. Lord Dion Blair, wrapped in a heavy cloak drawn up so as to shield his throat, walked to the door of Sir James Lowther's house. He was about to lift the heavy knocker when a strange irresolution came over him. He stood for a full minute without moving, then descended the steps, and began to pace slowly up and down the deserted pavement outside. No one was stirring at that hour in the inclement weather. Link-boys had not yet assembled for their duties, hackney coaches and chairs had not come from their shelters. It was the hour when Bath was resting, noon having seen all the fashionable residents and visitors back at their homes. The habit was to dine at four o'clock; as yet it was only three. Afterwards there would be service at the Abbey,

and in the evening a dance in the Assembly Rooms.

Lord Dion did not understand his own feelings. In his pocket was a note just received from Mr. Pitt. He had at once prepared to go out, with a view to taking it to Katherine Lowther. So far he had acted in accordance with what seemed the obvious line of action. Suddenly, as he had reached the door of the lady he loved, the friend to whom he would have entrusted every secret of his life, it was borne in upon him, that the small billet he had for her perusal was a tiny link in a chain of the greatest importance to two lives—nay, to three.

At the breakfast a few days earlier, when Mr. Pitt had been present, Lord Dion had, with the intuition which was his special gift, quickened in this case by the depth of his feelings, read what was passing in Katherine Lowther's mind. He saw that she was impressed by the great Statesman's estimate of Wolfe, by his appreciation of the exploits already performed, and his anticipation of further successes in the future. After all, Katherine, with her varied gifts, her sound common-sense, was a woman, and so open to those influences which are apt to decide matters even in the crises of life.

The note, which Mr. Pitt had hastily scribbled while he was preparing for an immediate journey to London, ran as follows—

“DEAR LORD DION,

“I have had intimation from Portsmouth that the *Namur* has been sighted in the Channel, undoubtedly with Admiral Boscawen and Colonel Wolfe on board her. I am hastening to London to join in their reception. I am sending a verbal message to Wolfe’s parents. You will doubtless convey the information to a quarter likely to be interested.

“Faithfully your friend,

“W. PITT.”

“The quarter which was likely to be interested!” It was to fulfil this expressed wish of the Statesman that Dion had come out this wet afternoon.

Thoughts crowded into his mind, recollections, doubts, the questionings of a fine spirit, anxious only to do the right. Vividly there came back to him the conversation he had had with Wolfe, on the place which love occupies in the scheme of life. He knew his friend had spoken out of the sincerity of his heart. Again the doubt came to him : had Wolfe to offer, could

he give a girl like Katherine such as would satisfy the continual requirements of her nature? For after all the word *continual* is the crux of the marriage state. Glamour may wear off, enthusiasms die, but the solid facts of life remain. Although Dion had not had opportunity of converse with Wolfe for many months, he did not doubt for an instant that his friend's return to England would bring about a crisis in the conditions obtaining between Katherine Lowther and himself. Something else thrust itself forward, and, against Dion's judgment and contrary to his will, forced itself upon his conscience. It was his own position, his own future. Hitherto he had been the friend to whom Wolfe had turned before all others. Hitherto he had been the confidant of Katherine Lowther, in preference even to a member of her own sex, such as her cousin Angela Lovesay. If this new relationship came about, his lot would assuredly be to vacate these positions, and, how dearly he had prized them, he never fully realised until now. Only a man who is shut away from his fellows, who has no intimate relationship and companionship to fill the void, can understand what a man like Dion Blair felt with this barrier staring him in the face, which would shut him out not from friendship, not from association, but from that

first place, that exclusive knowledge, which he had hitherto possessed and enjoyed. Yet it was his own doing. It was by his action the two had met. He could not draw back now if he would, and would not if he could.

His step regained its usual quiet assurance. Once more he went to the big door, and this time knocked for admittance. As he mounted the stairs and was shown once more into Miss Lowther's boudoir, Lord Dion could scarcely credit the fact, that only some six months had intervened since he was last there. So many thoughts and feelings, not to mention events, had occupied the interval, that it seemed to be stretched out into years. It was indeed a period of time, as regards the history of the Realm as consequential as any it had ever passed through, and although Lord Dion was debarred from personal participation in the laurels, which were being won by Mr. Pitt's Generals, especially in India and North America, his vivid imagination and intense interest almost gave him a personal part.

The fame of Pitt had risen to a marvellous pre-eminence throughout the Continent of Europe. Frederick of Prussia declared that "England had been in labour for generations, and had at last produced a man."

Boscawen and Wolfe were coming to pay their personal tribute to the great minister. They would undoubtedly receive a wonderful welcome at the hands of the British nation, so long accustomed to shame and defeat, not yet blazé of victory. All this, external in a sense, seemed to find expression, a local habitation and a name, in this visit which Lord Dion was paying to Katherine Lowther, as a messenger from Mr. Pitt. The future was in the lap of the gods, but a certain shaping was fairly clear to the mind of one mortal at anyrate.

Katherine was sitting at a harpsichord, conning some difficult music before attempting to play it. When the door opened, she half turned to see who it was. Miss Lovesay was in the room doing some plain needlework. She laid it on a table as Lord Dion was ushered in, and went across the room, partly to meet him, partly with a view to leaving him and Katherine alone.

She shot him a shrewd glance as she shook hands with him, and said in an undertone: "You have come as a messenger from Mr. Pitt to Miss Lowther. She was expecting you, for she has been warned that the communication was probable." She looked straight into his eyes. "Why are you content to play the part of Mercury? The messenger of the gods may be a

useful person, but his office is not of the highest." She smiled ironically, which conveyed the impression that she would have liked to shake him, if it had been *comme il faut*. Then she went to the door and closed it behind her with some unnecessary violence.

By this time Katherine had risen, and had advanced a few steps into the middle of the room. She seemed hardly in her usual splendid health; she betrayed an emotion which lent a pallor to her face, almost an anxious look to her eyes. Lord Dion noted this, as he noted everything that had to do with her, but was unable fully to interpret the whole meaning of her agitation.

She shook hands with him and said, "You have come with a message from Mr. Pitt?" She had not heard what Miss Lovesay had said, but it was recalled to Blair's mind by the way Katherine phrased her greeting.

It was true he was a Mercury, a go-between. For a moment the bitterness of the rôle he habitually played, the lifelong burden he had sustained, tasted like gall in his mouth. He felt incapable of saying anything, lest he should say too much. Instead, he took the short, hastily-written note and handed it to Katherine.

The room was not as yet artificially lighted. The day was drawing in quickly. Katherine went to the window so as to see better, yet she held the note in her hand for a few minutes without opening it. She was gazing into the vacant street, with the drizzle of the depressing day falling upon it. Not seeing this, the obvious and physical, but holding converse with herself, receiving visions which were as indistinct as the light of the afternoon.

Lord Dion remained where he had stood at the beginning, just watching the girl, noting for the thousandth time the graceful harmony of her profile and figure, the sense of race she conveyed, the dignity of her poise, without haughtiness or conceit. A woman to be loved. A woman he did love with all his heart *as a friend!* Something like a mist of tears came to his eyes, a self-pity which is the most pitiful of all, a poignant consciousness that it would have been better if he had never been born. Suffering is not a thing which can be measured by any scale of time. A chaliceful can be quaffed to the dregs in a second. Was the afternoon suddenly growing darker, or was it that darkness of the spirit which can be felt? •

Presently, in how long a time or how short

he could not have said, Katherine relaxed her tense attitude, opened the note, and bending her head slightly, with her face close to the window-pane, read it.

Having finished it, she dropped her hand to her side, but nevertheless did not turn towards Lord Dion.

A coach-and-four passed along the street. The life of Bath was waking up again from its afternoon rest. The sight of movement recalled her to herself. Now she went towards Lord Dion, holding out the note to him.

"Would you not like to keep it?" he asked. "It was really intended for you, although addressed to me."

She hesitated, then slipped it into the bosom of her frock. The act gave her a thrill of consciousness, as if she herself were being caressed.

"Thank you. I will keep the note for the present." Then she added, in another tone, "It will be a wonderful home-coming. How proud General Wolfe's parents will be! They think there is no son like him."

"That is quite true. We are all proud of him, the finest soldier of the day."

Dion Blair answered almost perfunctorily, as if some one else were speaking through his lips.

“You are tired,” Katherine said, noticing for the first time that he was looking worn. “Will you not sit?”

“No, I must be going, thank you.”

“We shall meet again presently?”

“Yes, I hope so.”

A minute later Lord Dion was descending the stairs, Katherine standing at the top to bid him farewell, and to see that the footman was ready to open the door.

Then she turned back, but instead of going to her boudoir, made her way to her bedroom. Here, too, a bright fire was burning, an easy-chair drawn up near it. The wooden bedstead had an awning at the top, covered with tapestry, but the foot was low, with a wooden bar across it. Over this Katherine’s maid had thrown the dress and other accessories, which her mistress would wear that evening.

Katherine locked the door behind her. She wanted time to commune with herself, a time for reverie. Sitting in the chair by the fire in the flickering light, imagination held her. She pictured many scenes dovetailed into one another, without beginning or end. She knew Portsmouth, and had seen the big ships come and go, enter the harbour and leave it; merchant vessels with their tapering masts, war vessels with

the ugly rows of guns, tier above tier, peeping from portholes and ranged along the decks. In one of these vessels Wolfe would arrive. He might even now be stepping upon the stone jetty, a great crowd witnessing his embarkation, cheering the heroes, Amherst, Boscawen and Wolfe—yes, and the men who had served under them, soldiers and sailors who had helped to place the British flag on the citadel of Louisburg.

She wondered in what direction James Wolfe would betake himself. Would he go to London to report to the Duke of Newcastle and to Mr. Pitt, the real master of the land and sea forces, or would he come to Bath?

Her heart quickened. Her breath showed the excitement of her feelings. Of course, that was out of the question, and she knew it; but the flitting of the idea through her mind produced the physical effect. She even felt herself blush.

Mr. Pitt, when he sent her the message, Lord Dion bringing it, had taken so much for granted, an interest which might not now exist, if it had ever been.

Months had passed, months of arduous toil, of strenuous fighting, with one central idea excluding all others. Few letters had come

home, and in these Wolfe had plainly indicated how entirely his mind and attention were absorbed in the war.

Who could say whether now, when he was home again, his mind, his heart would prosecute those sentiments and intentions, for which his most intimate friend gave him credit?

Katherine was too proud to allow herself, even in the seclusion of her heart, to think of one who might have forgotten her. She knew that during those wonderful days, when they had met continually at Bath, Wolfe had yielded to her a homage which nearly came to something far closer, more intimate. Her perception read his condition of mind without difficulty. But she was not like a girl unused to the society of men, fluttering like a timid bird on the threshold of maturity. She was a woman with a woman's experience. Again and again she had been paid the compliment a man offers to his choice of the other sex, the one he singles out to try to make his own. She knew that too much reliance must not be placed on the persevering devotion of a lover. Men, as a rule, are fickle, changeable: they are vowed to constancy with one breath, and outrage it with the next.

No, that was not true of all of them. Lord

Dion's face came before her as she had seen it that afternoon, weary, sad, with its record of indifferent health, its story of suffering, and beneath that the fine character, speaking through the eyes, indicated in the mobile lips.

CHAPTER XXIII

IN BATH ONCE MORE

ALL speculations indulged in by his friends, as to Wolfe's movements on landing at Portsmouth, proved illusory.

He went straight to Salisbury, which was at that time the head-quarters of the regiment of which he had been appointed colonel—the 67th.

Here he awaited leave, which was, of course, speedily forthcoming. From Salisbury he went to Blackheath, where his parents were residing, making it his *pied-à-terre*, while he went backwards and forwards to London. His appearance in the streets was greeted by rounds of applause.

He was present when the thanks of Parliament were tendered to the victors in the late expedition. He was banqueted in the city. None of these things served to disturb his modest demeanour. In fact the more he was fêted, the more he deprecated the honours thrust upon him.

This is the record of the time, from the pen of

an impartial historian : “The country rejoiced, and Parliament voted its cordial thanks to the Admiral and General Amherst. Wolfe’s portion was something approaching hero-worship. Everybody knew what he had done. Everybody seemed to be singing his praises, and the only person who seemed unconscious that he was a hero was himself.”

Although Wolfe had seen Mr. Pitt on several occasions, and had received at his hands the most cordial of welcomes, nothing definite had been said as to the future. Wolfe himself cast longing eyes on the battle-field of Europe. Here his old regiment was doing splendid work under Prince Ferdinand. Wolfe wanted to join them, but Mr. Pitt brushed on one side any suggestion of that sort. His chief had other things in store for the ablest officer at his disposal, but what they were remained a secret at present.

On the 7th of December Wolfe found himself once more on the road to Bath. He was broken down in health. He needed rest and the waters. There was nothing to detain him in London.

Were these the only causes which incited him to make the journey to the city of fashion—the Queen City of the west?

Wolfe knew that the end of the journey would bring him nearer the one bright, particular star, to which his thoughts and hopes had turned on the ramparts of Louisburg.

Katherine Lowther was in Bath.

Every mile he travelled drew him nearer the goal. He was approaching the city under very different conditions from those which obtained a year earlier, when he had made the same journey. He was no longer comparatively obscure, a rising young officer whose promise was known only to the few. His fortunes had improved with his position. He was assured of high command, carrying with it both prestige and reward. Even his humility was not sufficiently great to deny him the assurance, that any family in the land would welcome him as a match for the daughter of the house.

He reached Bath in the waning afternoon. His arrival was expected. The peal of bells from the Abbey rang out a welcome. Flags were hoisted on all public buildings, as well as out of the windows of not a few of the private houses. He was escorted to his lodging by a troop of young men splendidly mounted, the pick of the neighbouring hunts.

Katherine Lowther could not fail to be im-

pressed by the universal sentiment, which echoed the deep feeling of the nation. Her own patriotism was so great, that it enhanced her pride in the achievements of the man, who had won such success in the arduous task entrusted to him.

They met in the Assembly Rooms, and once more danced together. On the first occasion they had been strangers. Now they were friends, knit together by a year's association in thought, if not in actual contact.

Wolfe had thrown off his weariness, the state of health which had brought him to drink the waters. His spirit had risen to overcome the lassitude of the flesh, as it had done countless times in the trenches at the mouth of the St. Lawrence.

Lord Dion was indisposed, therefore absent. Sir James Lowther and Miss Angela Lovesay were at the ball. The former had given Wolfe the heartiest of welcomes, conveying in the shake of hands something more than a conventional greeting. Miss Lovesay alone displayed an acrid humour, out of harmony with the general applause.

The whole company of people looked on at the two dancers. Katherine Lowther was the

acknowledged queen of the place. Wolfe was the hero of the hour. For months gossip had pointed to a closer relationship between these two. The fact only enhanced the enthusiasm with which Wolfe was received.

"I want to hear the whole story from you," Katherine said, when they were comparatively alone in the small alcove, whither he had taken her on the night of their first meeting.

"It is too long," he deprecated, "and you know it already."

"Only the bare outline," she protested.

"The public at home has filled in the details—not always correctly. I hear exploits have been credited to me which I never did."

"All the more reason I should hear the truth from you, if you are not tired of repeating it."

He bent and looked at her. "There is only one other woman to whom I should dare to tell my most secret thoughts."

Katherine nodded. "I love her too," she said. "When are your father and mother coming to Bath again?"

"Soon, I hope. But where I shall be is another matter." •

"Are your plans so uncertain?"

“Not my plans. I am a feeble instrument, wielded by a power to which the bravest and strongest are ready to yield implicit obedience. What that power will direct next, I for one can only conjecture.”

When they parted, Wolfe arranged to breakfast at Colgrave's on the following morning, after drinking the waters.

During the weeks which passed Wolfe spent as much time as he could spare at Bath. Twice he was summoned to London at a call from Mr. Pitt. On the second occasion the plans of the great Minister were fully unfolded.

He had selected Wolfe for the achievement of capturing Quebec. In doing this he had once more, and in a marked fashion, violated the traditions of the Army, by placing so young an officer in a position so responsible. But now the Army itself, as well as the nation, would be prepared to register approval.

As yet the talk of the coffee-houses and other resorts was only conjecture concerning things pending in the coming year. Absolute secrecy was observed as to the plans.

Wolfe spent the Christmas of that year in Bath. It was to be to him an ever-memorable day. Ere a week passed he would have to leave

the west, to make his final preparations for the voyage to North America, which was to begin in February.

He had attended service at the Abbey, which was crowded. From his seat near the western door he could see the place where Katherine Lowther with her brother, cousin, and other acquaintances were worshipping.

When they issued into the open air again, he joined them. The morning was crisp and bright, with a few solitary flakes of snow falling from an open heaven, only a few clouds dotting the expanse of blue, from which the sun shone gloriously.

His thoughts were carried back to the day on which he had first arrived in Bath, and especially to the morning which followed, under somewhat similar atmospheric conditions to the present one. There was a set look about his mouth, a protrusion of his pronounced chin, when he suggested to Katherine they should cross the river, and take a turn in the meadows which lay on the further side.

She assented, and was surprised to find a certain nervousness expressed in the tones of her voice.

Walking briskly, they soon out-distanced the

rest of the party, who had turned in the same direction. A well-trodden field-path led to an incline on the further side, from which, looking back, the panorama of the city could be plainly seen, now that the winter had robbed the trees of their verdure.

Simultaneously, as they mounted the brow of the hill, they turned and surveyed the prospect. Wolfe raised his beaver almost reverently, as if to greet the city, with its Abbey conspicuous in the centre.

“I little thought,” he said, “when I came to Bath, how much pleasure I was to enjoy within its walls”—he lowered his voice, and said, very quietly, but so that she could hear—“what it would all come to mean to me. Miss Lowther—Katherine—I have brought you here to tell you a secret, which surely requires no divulging, for you must have guessed it for many months. I love you. I want to make you my wife if God gives me a resting time after the war.” Once more he raised his hat, but this time to the Deity, with that reverent demeanour, which was ever a distinguishing mark of the man throughout his life.

Katherine did not reply.

He went on, rather more rapidly : “I pondered

it much at the beginning of the spring before I left for America, but I had then so little to offer."

She stretched out her hand deprecatingly. "How can you say that?"

"It was true, nevertheless. It is true to a certain extent, even now. I am a poor man, with little but my pay." He raised his head proudly, showing the profile of his face in strong outline. "Since then much has happened. I have gained credit—more than is really my due; a position to which I could never have hoped to aspire a few years ago, perhaps even months. Mr. Pitt trusts me, and has offered me a place of which I cannot speak at present, even to you. Let it suffice that it indicates his confidence in my determination to overcome obstacles, as great as were ever presented to the genius of a commander of men. I have therefore now made up my mind to lay myself at your feet, to offer you all the homage of my nature, to ask you to give me some encouragement, some token which shall be my companion in the arduous task which lies before me, in the trying days and nights when, in a sense solitary, alone, I have to bear the burden of a great responsibility."

He spoke with an elevation of tone, a slow

emphasis of enunciation, which convinced his hearer—or would have done so had she needed convincing—that his words rang true from the bottom of his heart.

Her breast swelled with pride, for surely it was no small compliment which this man was paying her. The world was ringing with his name, lavishing upon him a rare mead of approval. He was the popular hero of the hour, and he laid his honours at her feet.

Although Katherine was experienced in the affairs of the heart, although her hand had been asked several times by men possessing attractions which appeal to a girl, she had as yet only a limited capacity for judging between admiration and love, between a deep sense of regard and that touch of soul to soul, which alone can make union in marriage an ideal state.

Already they could hear the sound of footsteps behind them; their time for being alone was fast drawing to a close. Wolfe stretched out his hand and touched one of Katherine's, the left, which was nearer him, the hand on which one day he hoped to place the ring of eternity.

“I want your answer.”

“When you return”—she faltered—“I shall be prepared to do as you wish, and in the



He lifted the hand and touched it reverently
with his lips.

meantime to think of you and pray for you daily."

A glow suffused Wolfe's pallid face. He lifted the hand and touched it reverently with his lips.

Was it strange that, as they walked homewards in a silence more eloquent than words, that this sentence rang in the ears of both of them :
"When you return"?

CHAPTER XXIV

IN COMMAND

ON the 26th of June, 1759, General Wolfe landed on the island of Orleans, which divided the river St. Lawrence into two parts. Nowhere wider than three or four miles, but twenty miles in length, it gave the appearance of there being two rivers instead of one.

The English fleet, under Admiral Saunders, was anchored under the lea of the island. Wolfe, accompanied only by Guy Carleton (whose appointment as Quartermaster-General had been made, in spite of the opposition of the King, through Wolfe's persistence), stepped on shore.

With hasty steps they scaled the highest point of the island, commanding a wide prospect of the opposite shore, with the most impregnable city in the world occupying the centre.

As has been well said, "The first sight of Quebec might well have 'daunted' the bravest spirit." A soldier of Wolfe's experience could understand and appreciate the enormous strength

of the position. It occupied the apex of a triangle made by the joining of two rivers, the St. Charles and the St. Lawrence. At the back was a ridge of rock, which was held to be unscalable, even by men who had known the heights from childhood. Everything possible had been done by the Marquis of Montcalm to strengthen the natural defences of the place. One of the ablest Generals of the age had devoted all his ability to secure the safety of the city from the possibility of attack. Forts, bastions, earthworks, cannon of every description and trajectory power, commanded the approach from every vantage point.

As the morning sun brought into bold relief the objects which were presented through Wolfe's glass, he could distinguish the evolutions of that fine army of fifteen thousand men, under the command of the great French General.

Pitt had intended Wolfe to have a force of twelve thousand of all arms at his disposal, but from various causes the number had dwindled and shrunk, until only nine thousand were prepared on that 26th of June to encamp on the island of Orleans.

Wolfe, however, was not daunted, although no man could recognise better than he the magni-

tude of the task which lay before him. He dropped his spy-glass, and, removing his peaked beaver cap, let the soft June wind play upon his face. Carleton, standing a few paces in the rear, remained stationary, regarding his chief with admiration and enthusiasm. His was a feeling shared by every seaman from Admiral Saunders downwards to the powder-monkey, by every soldier from Brigadier to drummer-boy.

It was a morning which might well fill Wolfe's mind with mingled emotions and thoughts. One note was undoubtedly that of thankfulness for what had already been achieved.

He had left England on the 17th of February. His farewell had been waved to his parents, Katherine Lowther, Lord Dion, and a small group of intimate friends.

It was the last time he was to see his father, for news of his death reached him before the siege of Quebec began. Then, after embarkation, had followed three months of tossing in tempestuous seas, which tried to the utmost his frail, delicate frame.

When they reached Canada, the harbour of Louisburg was still frozen, in spite of the fact that the month was May. The rendezvous of the fleet had taken place at Halifax. Following upon it had come the difficult voyage along the in-

clement shores of Newfoundland, crowned by the tortuous navigation of the St. Lawrence.

Not a Frenchman believed that the English fleet could ride with safety through the difficult and winding channel, beset by fogs which had not yet dispersed, navigating unknown waters.

But the indomitable spirit had once more conquered. Wolfe was looking at last on the goal of his ambition, on the subject of his dreams both by day and night.

Quebec! He had been sent to capture it, entrusted with the task by the master-mind of the Minister, who was making England the admiration of the world, restoring to her the prestige once gained, since lost, now within her grasp again.

At the age of thirty-two Wolfe was facing a responsibility, from which a General twice his age might have shrunk, without risk of being regarded as a coward. To him it represented the one word "opportunity." The time he had been looking forward to, the hope which had nerved him during long months of sickness, was about to bear fruit. No longer was he hampered by the lack of zeal or the slow cautiousness of superior officers.

As he gazed, something of the plans, which

were afterwards carried out, began to formulate in his mind.

He could see the spot on the mainland where a portion of his force could be entrenched. From there the guns could bombard the low-lying portions of the city. This was not the real point of attack, but it would harass and distress the enemy, and might possibly induce Montcalm to come down into the plain, and meet the British force face to face. In spite of the fact that the French Army was double the size of Wolfe's force, he had not the slightest doubt about the result of such a contest. His soldiers were the best-trained, the best-equipped, the finest for warfare of that day. With such an Army and such a leader, with the combined inspiration the one conferred upon the other, no task was too great, no disastrous issue to be feared.

But Montcalm knew it too. He had learnt to understand the power of the man opposed to him. He well knew that only the strength of his position rendered the odds in his favour. Take that away and his defeat was certain.

Captain Carleton stepped forward and saluted. Wolfe had been standing in his present position for the best part of an hour, while the panorama of a scene absolutely new to him, and with which his fortunes were so intimately connected, soaked

into his brain. Carleton, having less on his mind, had noticed something not apparent to his chief.

While the transports were engaged in disembarking troops and guns, the sky overhead had become black with clouds. One of those summer storms was impending, which spend themselves with remarkable force for a short interval, and then depart, leaving the sky radiantly clear. The present one had come up from behind them, its advance being hidden both from Wolfe and the fleet by a shoulder of the island.

“We are in for dirty weather, sir. There is a bad squall coming.”

Just as Carleton said this, the first gust of wind blew into their faces, followed immediately by a spray from the rain-cloud overhead.

In an incredibly short space of time the heavens were black, the wind howled and flung itself on land and sea, while the rain descended in torrents. It seemed as if they would be swept into the boiling surf of the St. Lawrence beneath them. Instinctively, they took refuge under a large sycamore, just behind the beacon-hill which had been Wolfe's mount of observation.

Dimly, through the driving rain, they could see the effect of the storm on the ships a quarter

of a mile off. Some were driven from their moorings and flung on the shelving beach. Boats laden with men and stores, caught *en route* between ships and shore, overturned, both soldiers and sailors having to save themselves as best they could.

Wolfe set his lips together in bitter, hopeless chagrin. His face, always rather white, lost the vestige of colour it possessed. It seemed as if the whole expedition would be destroyed before a single blow had been struck ; as if all the arduous efforts of the last few months, all the suffering, mental and physical, of the young Commander, all the anticipations of the Statesman who had planned the daring effort, would be frustrated and destroyed by a tornado, which no human being could anticipate or control.

The fury of the storm spent itself as quickly as it had risen. With rapid strides Wolfe hastened back to the south shore, where embarkation had been taking place before the rain. Carleton kept pace with him, but not a word was spoken between them. Each knew the fear that was in the other's heart : the fear that the fleet should have suffered so terribly, that nothing would be left to make it a fighting force ; the fear that valuable lives must have been lost during those brief minutes, when the fury of the

heavens seemed to be expending itself upon earth and sea.

They reached the edge of the cliff where it overlooked the scene, the shore sloping by gradual descent to the water.

Wolfe uttered a cry of thankfulness. The result of the storm had done less damage than he anticipated. Not a man, apparently, had been drowned, owing to the shallowness of the water on this side of the island. Already the men who manned the ships were busy repairing damage, hauling up overturned boats on to the beach, long lines of sailors roped together, salving the derelict stores.

When they saw Wolfe standing above them, looking down upon their efforts with obvious approval, a cheer greeted him which could be heard at the French encampment. His heart swelled with pride. He might well have been daunted by the long line of fortifications, the well-nigh impregnable position of Quebec, but the stimulus afforded by the brave men who feared nothing, who were ready to do and die for their country, their General, their King, proved to him the sort of material with which he had to essay his task. Out of what seemed to be a great disaster came an augury of victory.

Barely a week had passed before Wolfe received

another proof of the intrepidity of the gallant force he commanded. By that time all the nine thousand soldiers had been landed on the island of Orleans. The Fleet lay in the bay, or just outside, where the full force of the tide was not felt.

With Brigadier Monckton and Captain Carleton, Wolfe had spent two long days in an open boat, making acquaintance with the inlets of the opposite shore, where he proposed to land a brigade, and some artillery to play upon Quebec.

At the end of the second day they had returned, utterly weary, and Wolfe, after compelling himself to snatch a morsel of food, had flung himself on the rough bedding in his tent, to enjoy a much-needed rest. Barely was he wrapped in slumber before a bugle sounded from the *Neptune*, Admiral Saunders' flag-ship, accompanied by shouts of warning from myriad throats. Wolfe sprang up, alert, rushing out of his tent. Was it possible that Montcalm was making a sally in the night? The idea was ludicrous, for he would have delivered himself into the power of the English ships.

In the higher reaches of the river the nucleus of a French navy was anchored in a position, which every sailor, in the service of King Louis, believed to be out of reach even of that "mad-

ness which characterised the English attack.” From this direction brilliant lights gleamed one after another through the fog of night. Big red balloons seemed to be hanging in mid-air, gleaming portents.

Wolfe, just awakened out of sleep, failed to grasp the meaning of indications so foreign to his experience, but Admiral Saunders had seen service many years, and under all conditions. Coming down stream heading for the British ships, were some half-dozen vessels laden with combustibles of every kind, steeped in tar and resin, ready to be set alight and so to deal destruction on the ships of the foe.

CHAPTER XXV

A STRANGE COMMISSION

THE moments that followed were exciting enough. Suddenly the whole of the heavens seemed ablaze. Fireworks rent the air in all directions. The island of Orleans, the tidal water between, the mainland on the opposite shore were displayed with an illumination as great as that of the sun. The encampment of the English Army; the ships at anchor in the bay and outside it; the cannon which protruded from every fort and bastion commanding the river; the figures of English sailors lining the bulwarks, ready for action when the crucial moment should arrive; the gaunt figure of Wolfe himself, leaning forward, his chin thrust out, according to his wont in moments of excitement—these were features which remained on the recollection of the onlookers.

Owing to some blunder on the part of the attacking force, the fire-ships were set alight

before the opportune moment arrived. The excellence of the preparations had defeated the object aimed at. The vessels burnt too quickly, and had lost their capacity for doing damage, before they reached English waters. Burnt right down to the bulwarks, the English sailors seized the charred remains with grappling-irons and thrust them forth into the main stream, where they floated a helpless wreckage until the fire had done its work. This was the first of two occasions on which this manœuvre was attempted, without any damage, to speak of, being inflicted on the English ships.

The month which followed—July—was perhaps the most anxious Wolfe ever passed through during his arduous career. Sickness depleted his already exiguous force. Twice he himself seemed at the point of death. For five days, when the month was waning, he lay on his truckle-bed the prey of fever, with despair staring him in the face. Gloom hung over the expedition, soldiers and sailors believing their only hope of success being dependant on Wolfe's leadership. His most intimate friends, such as Captain Jervis, who was in command of a sloop anchored near Wolfe's quarters, Guy Carleton, and Brigadier Murray, were alone permitted to

visit the sick-bed. Their reports, conveying the news of the General's improvement or otherwise, were awaited eagerly, and went through fleet and encampment from lip to lip.

As Wolfe tossed from side to side, there could be seen on his chest the miniature Katherine Lowther had given him, just before he started on the voyage. She had had it painted on purpose for him. It was a speaking likeness. As soon as ever he was convalescent he wrote three letters—one to his mother, who was suffering from the pangs of her recent bereavement, one to Katherine, and last, but not least, to William Pitt.

This last letter is extant: "There is such a choice of difficulties in this situation that I own myself at a loss how to determine. The affairs of Great Britain, I know, require the most vigorous measures, but the courage of a handful of brave men should be exerted only when there is some hope of a favourable event. However, you may be assured, sir, that the small part of the campaign which remains shall be employed, as far as I am able, for the honour of His Majesty and the interest of the nation, in which I am sure of being well seconded by the Admiral and by the Generals."

Wolfe rose from the writing-table with determination in his eyes, to carry out that one forlorn idea, which had been with him as he tossed on the bed of sickness. That rugged, craggy cliff which terminated the Heights of Abraham, the apparent protection on the landward side of Quebec, must yield its secrets. A way must be found to scale its summit. It was a forlorn hope indeed, for every vantage-point was guarded by a strong force under General Bougainville. The tents of the French could be seen above the place where a path was visible through Wolfe's powerful glass. One point had caught his keen eye, a zigzag winding its way up the steep face of the Anse au Foulon. This was finally decided upon to form the objective of that great advance. Under the cover of night on the 11th of September, to be ever memorable in the history of Canada, of Great Britain, and of the world, the final dispositions were made.

It happened that a French convoy, conveying much-needed provisions to the beleaguered city, was expected to pass the higher reaches of the river that night. Wolfe learnt this fact from some prisoners captured by his troops. It helped his plans amazingly, for the sentries along the shore believed the English boats, when they

passed, to be the vanguard of the expected convoy. To avert the attention of the Marquis of Montcalm and the main French Army, the cannon of the fleet plied the French defences with a continual shower of shell, so that the thundering of the guns sounded high up along the river, acting as a kind of symphony to the silent movement of the vessels, conveying the small force of four thousand five hundred men, who were to attempt a deed, which was to be blazened forth for ever on the annals of courage. The night was dark, although the sky was clear, and stars pricked the darkness overhead. At two o'clock the tide served. Hardly any oars were required to propel the boats, so they proceeded with barely a sound.

Twice they were challenged by sentries from the bank, occupied by the enemy hard by. Fortunately, one of the officers could speak French fluently; his ready tact saved the force from premature disaster.

“Who goes there?”

“France.”

“Of what regiment?”

“The Queen’s Own.”

On the second occasion a sentry called out from the upper part of the cliff, demanding who was there.

“Provision boats. Make no noise, or the English will hear us.”

The answer had its due effect, and the English force was able to proceed.

Wolfe, who was in the cabin of the *Sutherland*, made his final dispositions. Then he sent a boat across to Captain Jervis, asking him to come on board. Somewhat surprised, the young Commander—afterwards to win so great a name as Admiral Jervis—responded to the call. Wolfe grasped his hand. His mouth was set, his eyes gleaming.

“To-morrow, Jervis, will see the end. By the time the sun has risen the fate of this expedition will be decided”—he lowered his voice—“and my own.”

“You will win through, sir, of that I am assured,” Jervis cried. “If you fail, not a man would dare remain to tell the tale. You are the idol of the Army. They love you as no General has ever been loved before.”

Wolfe laid a hand on Jervis’s shoulder. “I do not doubt that,” he replied. “Neither do I believe in failure. Ere twenty-four hours are over, the Heights of Abraham will have seen a great battle. Then the English flag will float over the walls of Quebec, as it already guards the ramparts of Louisburg.”

"If you believe that, sir——"

Wolfe interrupted him. "I do believe that, and more. I believe to-morrow will be the beginning of such a story as few even dream of; that these wide lands of Canada will become an Empire, a daughter-land to ours. If I help to lay the foundation-stone of that edifice, I shall die content."

"Do not speak of death, sir; rather think of victory, of the return to England, proud indeed to call you her son."

Wolfe shook his head. His eyes looked past his friend's face, beyond the sides of the cabin, right away into a futurity, which his spirit seemed to touch with a physical sense of possession.

"I have no doubt about the result. To-morrow will see the end—of that I am assured."

Jervis would have interrupted, but a gesture from Wolfe made him silent.

"I have a commission to entrust to you."

"To me?" Jervis responded, in some surprise, for, although Wolfe had shown him marked favour, he knew he had other and more intimate friends—Carleton, for instance.

"Yes, you of the Navy have done your part right well, but to-morrow will lie with the Army. Who shall say which of us will remain to carry the news to England, or to do my errand?"

As Wolfe spoke, he withdrew the miniature from under his inner vest. He held it in his hand and looked at it long and fixedly. His mouth worked with an indication of emotion, which he would not allow to appear otherwise. It was the portrait of Katherine Lowther, encircled by pearls.

“Will you take this,” he said, “to Miss Katherine Lowther at Bath? Let no one touch it but yourself, and as you hand it to her, tell her it was next my heart from the day she gave it me until to-night.”

Jervis half-turned away. He brushed his sleeve across his eyes. “Surely, sir,” he urged, “this is a despondency such as is quite foreign to you.”

Wolfe pressed his hand. “I am not afraid of death,” he replied. “The only thing I fear is defeat, disgrace, dishonour, the dishonour of my country even more than of myself, the one involved in the other. I can face death with no more a tremor than as I look into your face.”

The anchor of the *Sutherland* was at this moment dropped over the side of the vessel. They could hear the splash, quietly as it was done, and the grinding of the chain against the side of the ship.

"The time has come," Wolfe said. "You will do my bidding, Jervis?"

Without another word they separated. The *Sutherland* led the way. Wolfe in person superintended the landing. As yet not a suspicion of their coming had reached the French lines.

To Colonel Howe, an officer in whom Wolfe placed the utmost trust, had been given the task of first scaling the heights of the Anse au Foulon. A call had been made for volunteers. Hundreds of men were ready to undertake a hazardous task, about which they knew nothing. Two dozen were selected, the majority being Highlanders, with a few Grenadiers.

At the foot of the cliff Wolfe waited with four thousand five hundred men as silent as the grave. The sounds of the night, the chirping of crickets, the song of the bull-frogs in the marshlands, the booming of the surf along the shore, these alone broke the stillness.

The zigzag path, which Wolfe had selected to be the means of reaching the heights above, had been blocked by boulders; but Howe and his men would take no suggestion of defeat. They scaled what seemed to be almost impossible heights, the Highlanders especially showing infinite skill in overcoming natural obstacles. Well might

General Wolfe be thankful that, owing to his insistence, these men had been included in the British contingent.

Howe gained the summit. The flashes and rattle of muskets told their tale as Howe's men rushed the small French encampment and drove its occupants, suddenly roused from sleep, helter-skelter before them.

Like a tidal wave the Army at the back of Wolfe swept up the heights; even two or three cannon were dragged to the summit by incredible exertions.

From the distance still came the booming of the guns of the *Neptune*, and other big vessels, under the command of Admiral Saunders.

But the deception, as to the real object of the English attacking force, could no longer be maintained. The sound of firing had already been heard in the streets of Quebec. The garrison drums were beating to arms. A horseman was galloping as fast as the darkness and uneven ground permitted to acquaint the Marquis of Montcalm with the news. Another horseman had started earlier to bring the alarm to General Bougainville, who with two thousand men lay a few miles to the rear.

The Chevalier Johnson was sleeping in Montcalm's tent. He was an officer of wide experi-

ence and tried courage. In a few minutes the French Commander-in-Chief, and his companion, were galloping towards the quarters where Governor Vaudreuil's house was situated.

By this time the dawn light had come into the sky. Objects could now be seen on the lofty tableland, which the French had supposed was guarded by the impregnable cliff-barrier, over which the British had passed an hour earlier.

Through the mist Montcalm and his companions could see the long red line of the British Army. This was not a detachment, a company, or a brigade, as Montcalm had at first imagined, when the news was brought to him.

General Wolfe had succeeded in accomplishing the impossible. He had reached the battleground with all his force. The issue could not now be avoided, or even postponed.

Messengers were sent in all directions. The French drums beat to arms. Soon Montcalm, riding his charger, was at the head of a force, in numbers double that which his rival commanded.

In the meantime Wolfe had made his dispositions. He had addressed and stimulated the troops by a few words, which reflected his own courage and hope. Everywhere he was welcomed by a shout of confidence. The veteran

soldiers of that small but compact force trusted their leader absolutely, while he in return believed them to be unmatched in the armies of the world.

By nine o'clock the French could be seen advancing, their arms and accoutrements gleaming in the sunshine. In the distance were the towers and spires of the city, the prize for which these two armies were to fight that day.

The firing commenced from the French lines directly they were within musket-shot. Here and there the shots told. Wolfe himself was hit in the wrist early in the engagement, but he took no heed of the wound.

Strict orders had been given that not a shot should be fired throughout the English ranks, until the bugler under Wolfe's own hand should give the signal.

Silently the long line bore the brunt of attack, sharp-shooters from the woods on their flank keeping up a galling fire, while the French troops poured in volley after volley. Barely forty yards separated the two armies when Wolfe, with a wave of his sword, gave the necessary order.

Then every gun in the front line of the British force rang out with simultaneous effect. Never before had such a volley been fired in the history of warfare. Its effect was tremendous and

instantaneous. Whole battalions of the enemy were mown down, while the rest reeled back, struck by a mortal blow. Wolfe, waving his sword above his head, called upon his men to advance on the confused and serried ranks. They swept across the plain with a power which nothing could gainsay.

The day was won !

CHAPTER XXVI

THE HEIGHTS OF ABRAHAM

ALTHOUGH Wolfe during the first onset, and in the height of the battle, had appeared to be present in person at all points of the advance, his real place was at the head of the Grenadiers. This was at the extreme right of the English line. Associated with the Grenadiers was the 28th Regiment of foot, supported by the 35th immediately at their rear.

This portion of the column was the nearest to the thickly-wooded district, which lay between the top of the cliff and the walls of Quebec. At the outset these woods had been occupied by the Militia of the district. They were excellent marksmen, accustomed to fighting under cover, more dangerous in the wood than they would have been in the open.

Wolfe gave no heed to the sharp-shooters thus ambuscaded. His whole attention was paid to turning the defeat into a rout, to the completion of his victory. The martial ardour of his spirit, so long pent up, so long confined in a narrow

channel, while his plans were being formed, could now be permitted full play. His eagle glance, his waving sword, his trumpet tones encouraged the troops around and behind him in their ardour of pursuit, but that conspicuous figure in its red coat and yellow facings made an effective mark for the hidden foe. A shot came, and found its billet in Wolfe's body. In all probability the wound was mortal, but the heroic spirit was not to be gainsaid. He still struggled on. A few seconds later a second shot passed through his lungs. He fell to the ground, strove to rise, but failed.

The incident, which was shortly to cast a gloom over the rejoicings of the whole Army, passed almost unnoticed.

Wolfe was carried out of the firing-line, but the pain of the movement becoming intolerable, he instructed his bearers to lay him on the ground. At the suggestion of finding a surgeon he shook his head.

"It is all over," he gasped.

With poignant grief the soldiers stood watching by the side of their dying General. Already the tide of battle was sweeping onwards towards the doomed city. The French were in full retreat, with scarcely a semblance of order or discipline. Montcalm, himself mortally wounded,

had striven his utmost to rally the retreating force, but without avail.

“They run! See how fast they run!” cried a Grenadier in the circle of Wolfe’s guard. Wolfe had sunk into a stupor, but the words roused him.

By a great effort he lifted his head to try to see for himself, but his eyes were dimmed, and the smoke from the firing obscured the air.

“Who run?” he asked.

“The enemy, sir. They give way everywhere.”

“Thank God!” Even in that dying moment Wolfe gave a direction with the intent of cutting off the retreat. Then he sank back, giving up his soul, as many a time he had declared he one day hoped to do, in the flush of victory, dying for the cause of his country and his King.

Within a week all that was mortal of a man, as great as any England has ever produced, was carried into the city of Quebec, over which now waved the British flag. Here his body was embalmed. The conqueror, himself conquered by death, entered the city which had been the goal of his ambition for many months. His rival and adversary, Montcalm, had been buried in the centre of the scene of disaster, but Wolfe’s body was to be conveyed back to England.

On the 18th of October every flag in the English Fleet and on the battlements was at half-mast. Guns boomed out once more, but this time with a dull monotony of sound, which no longer indicated an attack, the speed and confusion of battle. These were minute guns, paying their last tribute of respect to the hero, who had given up his soul to God on the Heights of Abraham.

A month later almost to the day the *Royal William*, bringing Wolfe's body home, was sighted off Spithead. All England was waiting for the home-bringing of their hero:

When joy bells had rung out over London for the magnificent and almost despaired-of conquest of Quebec, there had been a deep undercurrent of sorrow. Wolfe in a few years had not only carved a niche for himself in the temple of fame, but had managed to attract, without any intention, the admiration of the nation. The heroic figure had been pictured on every news-sheet, had taken its place, almost as a national symbol, in every heart. Now their hero was being brought home; they were about to lay the shattered body to rest.

At Portsmouth the coast was thronged with spectators, the majority wearing mourning. A small group stood together, hardly exchanging

a word, but with hearts sorrowing and overcast with the terrible sense of a great loss. Wolfe's widowed mother was conspicuous in the centre of this group. Supporting her were Lord Dion on the one side, Katherine Lowther on the other. Sir James Lowther, Miss Lovesay, and three or four old comrades of the General completed the company.

When the *Royal William* anchored on the previous night full arrangements had been made for the debarkation on the morrow. At eight o'clock the draped barges had arrived at Portsmouth.

Every man's head in that great assemblage was bared; women were weeping. The church bells tolled out their solemn message of sympathy and regret. The guns of the naval ships within the harbour boomed out into the morning air. The requiem to Wolfe could be heard distinctly on the shores of France.

Somehow it became known that the party of mourners, assembled together on the jetty, had the most right of all to greet the advancing procession. A way was made for them by an instinctive movement of the crowd. Sir James Lowther gave his arm to the mother, Lord Dion to her who was to have been the wife, had the home-coming been other than it was.

At Blackheath, with the grand message of hope of the English Burial Service, the remains were laid to rest in the family vault, in sure and certain hope of that final and complete victory, which is the goal and stimulus of every believing heart.

Christmas was almost due again, when one day a visitor came to Sir James Lowther's house at Bath. It was Captain Jervis, bringing the miniature which had been entrusted to him for personal delivery. Captain Jervis described to Katherine in a few blunt but telling phrases the scene in the cabin of the *Sutherland*, on the night before the battle, when he had so unexpectedly been summoned to attend upon General Wolfe. He spoke of the foreboding, amounting to moral certainty, which Wolfe had expressed with regard to the issue of the morrow, of the commission he had received to place the miniature in Miss Lowther's hands, if the result of the battle proved to be what Wolfe expected. As he described the scene and related the conversation, he lived it over again in memory; his emotion showed itself in his face.

"We shall never see his like again; he had indeed the heart of a hero."

Katherine bowed her head in mute assent, her lips quivered, her eyes were filled with tears. She was afraid to trust her voice to speak.

Captain Jervis rose. "I must be going." He held out his hand. "I am proud to have met you. We all honour you, sailors and soldiers, every man of us who served under the General. To have been loved by him, for him to have worn your likeness during those weary months of suspense, to be in his thoughts on the eve of battle, to have had his last message."

"I thank you," Katherine whispered, "for all you have done, for all you say. Just now I cannot express myself, but I hope to meet you again. My heart is too full for words. Before you leave the house my brother asked me to say that he would like to see you and thank you in person, as the head of the family."

"Nay, Miss Lowther," Captain Jervis protested. "I never thought of such a thing. Please do not trouble."

She rang a bell. A servant was bidden to take Captain Jervis to the library, where Sir James Lowther was awaiting him.

Before he left, Katherine took his hand and pressed it warmly: "I shall always consider you

one of my friends." She turned away, her lips quivering, unable to say another word.

She still stood in the centre of the room, as Captain Jervis went out. The vision of her sorrow and beauty, the dignity of her grief, never faded from his memory.

During the months which followed, the first edge of sorrow Katherine felt for the tragic fate of General Wolfe wore off under the kind touch of time, which soothes the most poignant griefs. She remained in seclusion, seeing only a few of her greatest friends, like Lord Dion and the Fiennes. She took long walks and rides, sometimes alone, sometimes with Lord Dion. Their friendship was cemented, and drew them closer together, owing to the experience they passed through in their common sorrow. Katherine daily visited the hospital, looking to her work there as a relief and solace.

During the spring Miss Lovesay became engaged to a Yorkshire baronet, Sir Ralph Abercromby. She spent a considerable part of her time in visiting his relations, so that Katherine was deprived of the companionship, which had filled a large part of her life, in spite of the fact that she and her cousin looked at almost all matters from a different standpoint.

Katherine had locked the miniature away in a drawer she rarely opened; it contained some of her most private papers. On the anniversary of the night James Wolfe had the interview with Captain Jervis, Katherine unlocked this drawer and took the miniature into her hands. She tried to picture the circumstances Captain Jervis had related to her. A tear fell on the speaking likeness. She brushed it away with her handkerchief. But her eyes were dim with tears, she could no longer distinguish what she was holding in her hand. And yet beneath it all was the consciousness, which she could not help thinking James Wolfe had shared, that, deep as was their mutual regard, true as they would have been to one another, if he had survived the battle on the Heights of Abraham, there would have been something lacking, which ought to have been the very foundation of the bond between them. Katherine knew it now. Had she not known it in her heart-of-hearts all along? Was it not due to this unspoken but ever-present knowledge, that the actual words of betrothal had never been said? In spite of the fact that she had given him the token he had asked for, in spite of the fact that he had never parted with it, and had worn it next to his heart, they had been content with tacitly accepting the future as belonging to

each other. They had preferred to wait for a return, which was never to be permitted in life, before exchanging the solemn promise, which would be the next most binding to that of marriage itself.

Did James Wolfe know all along that he would never come back? If he had felt a premonition of this, it was in accordance with the nobility of his character and the lofty tenor of his life, that he should shrink from binding Katherine more closely to himself. Many times Katherine revolved these thoughts in her mind, especially during those hours of wakefulness, which she spent after retiring to rest, during the first months of sorrow. The kiss of betrothal had never been given. To her this was an ever-present fact: a matter trivial in some respects, but in others of great importance.

She locked away the miniature and went to the window. There was just light enough to distinguish figures in the street, as they passed between the infrequent lamps. As she stood there, she saw Lord Dion Blair, heavily cloaked, although the cold of the winter had not yet set in. He was not coming to the house, but passing, probably on his way to the Assembly Rooms, which had just re-opened for the winter session.

As she looked, it struck her what a pathetic

figure he presented. She had never before realised to the full extent his loneliness, a loneliness of spirit which was somehow conveyed in his drooping shoulders, in the poise of his bent head. Friends he had in plenty, love was accorded him by not a few, yet Katherine knew that afternoon, as she had never known before, that he was the loneliest man in Bath.

CHAPTER XXVII

A WOMAN SPEAKS HER MIND

LORD DION BLAIR was walking alone with slow steps down the Mall in the direction of his house. His hands were behind his back, a gold-headed Malacca cane dependent from one of them. He had been exercising for the last hour in the Park. His whole attitude suggested either physical weariness or mental depression, yet the day was bright and crisp, with the warm sun of mid-October dispelling the early morning mist.

Two years had gone by since the death of General Wolfe and the capture of Québec, a period of great importance in the history of England, including as it did the death of George II and the accession of his grandson. The power of William Pitt had passed with the new order of things, inaugurated by the young sovereign of three-and-twenty.

As regards the dramatis personæ of this narrative, the months and years had proved almost uneventful. Angela Lovesay had become Lady

Abercromby, and had presented her husband, to his great satisfaction, with a son and heir. This latter event had happened three months earlier. Sir Ralph and Lady Abercromby with their household had moved to town, where Sir Ralph had a house in Jermyn Street, to spend the intervening time till Christmas.

Katherine Lowther with her brother had taken up their old quarters at Ely House, once again let to them by the Bishop. As regards Katherine, she seemed least of all to have felt the influence of time. Her beauty had, if anything, matured, while the sadness which came into her life, owing to the death of James Wolfe, had served to accentuate and deepen those finer womanly qualities, which had never been absent from the time she came to years of discretion.

Lady Abercromby, with her quick wit, taking up the threads of the life-stories of her cousin and Lord Dion, after absence, had come to certain conclusions, not new, but ratifying impressions she had had for a long period. It happened that she and her husband, with two ladies of their acquaintance, crossed the Mall just as Lord Dion was making his way from it. Exchanging a few hurried words with her husband, Lady Abercromby left him to the company of their friends, and followed Lord Dion at a quick

pace, to overtake his slow-moving footsteps. She came up to him as he was about to enter his house.

Hearing her, he turned, greeting her warmly, the shadow which had been across his features dispersing as he welcomed her. Lord Dion had never been wholly in sympathy with her somewhat mordant wit, but he had known throughout that she was his friend, a genuine and loyal ally, and, after all, this draws people together, even if in some respects they are not wholly congenial.

"I want to have a chat with you," she said.

"Always a pleasure," he smiled. "Will you come in?"

They entered his house side by side, and crossing the hall he led her into an oak-panelled room well stocked with books, the companions of his hours indoors. He wheeled a chair towards the fire, but Lady Abercromby seemed disinclined to take it, picking up first one book, then another, which lay on the tables, looking at the pictures on the walls, flitting from one point to another.

Lord Dion had divested himself of his long overcoat, handing it to a servant in the outer hall. He stood with his back to the mantelshelf at one corner, watching her, noting a certain unusual

Nervousness in her manner, wondering what it portended. Something told him that this was no ordinary visit; that Lady Abercromby had something in her mind which she deemed of importance, and that she had not yet decided how to express what she wanted to say. He waited quietly until at length she spoke.

"I once knew three people, two of them intimately, one slightly." She paused.

Lord Dion bent towards her, his fine eyes fixed upon her face. She looked at him, then she looked away, then back again, with an expression almost of defiance.

"Yes?"

"I had a great regard, perhaps something more, for two out of these three people, and a respect for the third, but I should have liked him better if he had not come in, with the assistance of one of the others, to spoil my most cherished desire."

Lord Dion's lip quivered for a moment. He could fancy he heard the beating of his heart. He could not pretend to himself that he failed in any way to understand Lady Abercromby's allusions, but something amounting to fear had come into his mind, the kind of fear a man might have in the old days, before anæsthetics, when an

operation was about to be performed, and he saw the preparations of doctors and nurses. Silence reigned in the room until Blair, almost unintentionally, broke it.

"One is dead," he said, in very gentle tones, so soft and low, that the words would not have reached his auditor had not her whole faculties been absorbed in listening.

She nodded. "Two remain. They are apart, and they ought to be together."

"You are treading on delicate ground," he suggested.

"Do you think I do not know that every bit as well as you do? Do you know I have been on the brink of saying it on many occasions, and always drawn back? Now I can refrain no longer. I am compelled by a force stronger than my own will. I see two lives drifting into a fog, which can only deepen if the present course is pursued and persisted in."

Lady Abercromby took two or three steps forward, until she was near enough to touch Lord Dion if she wished. Now her eyes sought his, no longer turning away through nervousness, as they had done at the beginning.

"I cannot and will not see two lives wrecked, two beautiful characters weighed down with a load they need not bear, without saying what is

in my mind. I cannot speak to her—I do not need to do so—but I can and will to you. Lord Dion, Katherine Lowther loves you. She has always loved you, not knowing, perhaps, through all those years of close companionship, exactly what her feelings meant. You have only to speak the word to open the portals of her heart, which would be flung wide to receive a most honoured and loved guest.”

With a thin hand Lord Dion wiped the perspiration from his brow.

“You torture me,” he said. “You make me suffer more than you can possibly realise.”

“If I make you suffer, it is that you may rejoice ever afterwards, that you may quaff to the bottom the brimming cup of life.”

Drumming in his ears were the words, “Katherine Lowther loves you. She has always loved you, not knowing through those years of close companionship exactly what her feelings meant.”

Could it be true? Could it be possible? He would have believed it from no one else. But the knowledge and wit of this shrewd woman convinced him almost against his will.

“I am not worthy of her. I have never even dared to look at such a prospect. I have striven to keep it even from my dreams.” He clasped

his hands together. "Sometimes the fight has been most strenuous. It has nearly killed me to keep the words back that would come to my tongue."

"Not worthy!" Lady Abercromby cried. "It is your humility which formulates the plea. She thinks you more than worthy, the finest character she has ever known, and I think so too," she added, curtly.

Lord Dion shook his head. "You little know me. I have been weak throughout. I am jealous sometimes, God forgive me, of him who is gone, although I loved and respected him with all my heart, and it was my doing they were brought together."

"Do you think I forget? I did my little to thwart it, to protest, but I dared not speak as I am speaking now. One thing I will tell you which only one other knows besides myself; there was never any real betrothal between them. No kiss ever passed from her lips to his."

She turned away, and walking across the room, opened the door and went out into the hall.

Lord Dion did not seem to realise what was happening. The most courteous of men had allowed a lady to leave him, without a door being opened to admit her passage, without a bow ushering her from his threshold. It was a time

of stress, of a life-and-death struggle in his heart. It was a time when all other things were forgotten, became as naught beside the one issue so deep, so profound, so absorbing, that it rent him as an earthquake rends a rock, disclosing the very foundations. He turned and leant his elbows on the mantelpiece and buried his face in his hands. He was living again the past, weighing every indication that memory could suggest, deciding what he should do, or leave undone, what he should speak, or leave unspoken.

CHAPTER XXVIII

WHAT CAME OF IT

KATHERINE LOWTHER was leaning on the parapet, watching the play of sunlight on the river, the slow progress of the barges plying up and down. She heard footsteps behind her on the garden path, and turned. She was wearing a warm cloak, but the glory of her hair had no covering. It was gathered up into a regal coronet with a diamond ornament, crescent-shaped, half hidden, half exposed. She saw Lord Dion coming towards her and smiled, but the smile passed quickly from her lips, for his face was pale, agitated. He seemed to be the bearer of bad tidings. She hastened towards him, holding out both her hands.

“What is the matter?” she cried. “You are in trouble. Has something happened?”

It required no imagination on her part to understand that if Lord Dion were stricken in any way, it would be to her he would turn first, for sympathy—in a sense, for help.

“Nothing,” he answered. “Nothing, I assure you.” Yet he took her hands into his as if what she had surmised was true.

“It is only myself, nothing else. The old self I have never been able to conquer.”

“Surely you do not wish it? Why should you be other than what you are, the man we all——”

He looked at her eagerly. “You did not finish,” he urged.

A gentle smile played about her lips, disclosing her white teeth. It lightened the dark depths of her eyes.

“It is not necessary to say it. You know, we all—love you!”

Why had he not let go her hands? What was this unwonted expression upon his face? She, too, began to be stirred, agitated. Hitherto she had seemed as a lake hidden in the mountains, over which not a breath of wind played, calm, cool, refreshing. Now she was different. The wind had swept down the mountain-side, the water was agitated into waves.

“Yes, but what do you mean by love?”

She looked him straight between the eyes, but her breath came intermittently.

“Surely you know I mean everything the word contains, and it is the widest, deepest word in all language.”

She tried to release her hands, but the grip, of his thin fingers resisted her efforts.

"Katherine, you know you are as far above me as the stars in the heavens. You know I am what I am."

He gave a little shudder, almost of physical repulsion, at his imperfection of form.

She interrupted him. "I know only that you are of all men, to me, the most wonderful. I know the jewel of your heart, of your character, of your life."

"You are not playing with me?" he asked.

"Playing? Do you think I could?"

"No, but it means so much to me. I have striven to put it from me all these years. I even planned to give you up to some one else worthier than I, worthy almost of you."

"Hush!" She released her hands, and instead laid one on his arm, and so led him towards the parapet, on which she had been leaning when he came.

"Let us not think of the past," she suggested.
"We have the present and the future."

"Together?" he whispered, bending his face close to hers, so that he might read her very soul.

"Yes, together, if you will it so, my lord," and as she said it he knew that this was no

courtesy-title, but the surrender of herself, of all she had, of all she was, to him.

They were married quietly, shortly after Easter, in the following year. By that time Lord Dion had succeeded, quite unexpectedly, to the highest rank to which an English nobleman can attain, two lives, which had seemed infinitely better than his, no longer separating him from the great estate. He was glad he had this to lay at Katherine's feet, yet he knew she cared nothing; he knew now, she loved him for himself alone—and was content.

THE END

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